What can be shown, cannot be said: Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the Tractatus and the Investigations

Phillips, Dawn Melissa

"What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said": Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*

Dawn Melissa Phillips

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Abstract

My thesis is that the say-show distinction is the basis of Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in both the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

Wittgenstein said that the *Investigations* should be read in conjunction with the *Tractatus.* To understand the *Tractatus* we must understand the say-show distinction: the principle that "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said". A correct interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy will explain the significance of the say-show distinction for the *Investigations*. I evaluate three available readings of the say-show distinction which fail to meet this challenge.

I argue that Wittgenstein's main purpose throughout his career was to replace traditional philosophy with an alternative conception of philosophy, which can only be understood through the say-show distinction. The *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* are different attempts to present the same conception of philosophy. I describe how, in both cases, they present a distinctive account of the nature of philosophical problems, the appropriate methods of philosophy, the end result of a philosophical task and the overall aim of philosophy.

I argue that my interpretation provides a correct view of the significant continuities and discontinuities between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. The failure of the *Tractatus* was not a flaw in the conception of philosophy presented in it, nor a flaw in the say-show distinction. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein failed properly to implement his proposed conception of philosophy, as he remained in the grip of traditional philosophical presuppositions. The *Investigations* presents the same conception of philosophy, but freed from the presuppositions of the *Tractatus*. The say-show distinction remains the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

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1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline my argument, discuss my exegetical strategy and set my thesis in the context of current philosophical debates.

My project is motivated by two related concerns. I believe that Wittgenstein challenged traditional conceptions of philosophy and proposed an important alternative. I also believe that philosophers have not fully understood the role and significance of the say-show distinction. In this work I aim to demonstrate that the distinction is of central importance to Wittgenstein's thought, not only in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, but also in the *Philosophical Investigations*. My thesis is that the say-show distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.

A brief outline of my argument is as follows: Wittgenstein's main aim throughout his career was to replace traditional philosophy with an alternative conception of philosophy. In the *Tractatus*, the say-show distinction is the basis for this new conception. The failure of the *Tractatus* was not a flaw in the conception of philosophy, nor a flaw in the say-show distinction. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein failed to properly implement his proposed conception of philosophy, as he remained in the grip of traditional philosophical presuppositions. The *Investigations* presents the same conception of philosophy, but freed from the presuppositions of the *Tractatus*. The say-show distinction remains the basis of the conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*.

My thesis is important for the following reasons: it challenges and corrects prevalent misinterpretations of Wittgenstein's thought. It provides a fruitful way of understanding the relationship between the two main stages of his career – the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* – and accounts for both continuity and

discontinuity in the development of his thought. In addition to its significance as a work of exposition, this thesis presents a conception of philosophy which may subsequently be judged on its own merits. I plan to employ and defend this conception of philosophy in future research projects by applying the aims and methods to contemporary philosophical problems.

2 Exegetical Strategy

My project is primarily exegetical, insofar as my task is an exposition of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, rather than an evaluation or a defence. As exegesis it is supported textually and aims for internal coherence, but, like any interpretation, it cannot claim unconditional superiority over alternative interpretations. Here I make explicit my exegetical strategy so that it will be clear whether the difference between my interpretation and those of other commentators is due to our different hermeneutic commitments or whether we agree on our interpretative strategy but have a substantial disagreement about the text.

I have chosen to concentrate on the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, rather than consider the entire corpus of Wittgenstein's writing. This is appropriate due to constraints of space, but also for good exegetical reasons. Wittgenstein laboured over the presentation of his ideas and was on the whole reluctant to make his notes public. Of his unpublished material we can only be confident that he wished the *Investigations* to be published posthumously and, even so, he considered part one to be more satisfactory than part two. He published only two works of his own philosophy during his lifetime – the *Tractatus* and "Some Remarks on Logical Form". There are significant differences in his attitude towards these two works. The *Tractatus* was the only book that he approved for publication during his lifetime and he assisted with the editing process. At the time of publication he believed it was successful. In the case of the article he withdrew his endorsement of the views even before it was published. His view of the article was that it was totally worthless,[1] but the *Tractatus* was not a failure in

[1] In a letter to the Editor of *Mind* dated 12th April 1933 he called it a weak article. (*Philosophical Occasions* p.156) and told his friends that it was worthless (Op. Cit. p.28).

the same way.[2] When the *Investigations* was published Wittgenstein wrote in the preface that it should be read in conjunction with the *Tractatus*:

> It seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking. (PI Preface p.viii)

I believe that a correct interpretation of the *Investigations* is one that can account for the relationship between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*. Wittgenstein's ideas can be properly understood using these two texts, without the need for additional material; however I include references to his published notes, personal correspondence and reports of conversations where they illuminate a point that already has textual basis in the *Tractatus* or *Investigations*.

Wittgenstein's discussions of a range of philosophical issues have become highly influential contributions to philosophy of logic and language, philosophy of mind, epistemology and even metaphysics. Although studies of his treatment of these issues are very important, I believe that it is necessary to understand his work on particular problems via an overview of his conception of philosophy. I use the phrase 'conception of philosophy' to encompass several related ideas including views about the nature of philosophical problems, the appropriate methods of philosophy, the end result of a philosophical task and the overall aim of philosophy. Although his discussions of particular philosophical concerns are valuable and indicate issues that he felt deserved treatment, these discussions are best seen as illustrations of his conception of philosophy, rather than his primary concern. Instead I believe that Wittgenstein's main aim throughout his career was to offer a replacement for traditional conceptions of philosophy and it is the task of my interpretation to present a clear account of his new conception of philosophy, rather than interpret his treatment of particular problems. Furthermore I believe that Wittgenstein's work on particular problems cannot be paraphrased without loss, but his overall conception of philosophy can be described. It should

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[2] According to Elizabeth Anscombe, "Wittgenstein used to say that the *Tractatus* was not *all* wrong: it was not like a bag of junk professing to be a clock, but like a clock that did not tell you the right time"(Anscombe 1959, 78).

be possible to describe what Wittgenstein was attempting to do without treating this description as a substitute for working through each philosophical problem in its own right. A major challenge for any commentator is to give an account of Wittgenstein's ideas without distortion from oversimplification or systematisation.

In both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* the presentation of Wittgenstein's ideas is inextricably connected to his conception of philosophy – I take very seriously the idea that the text is more than a mere container for philosophical content. However, although the texts offer great potential to explore different stylistic and hermeneutic issues, I do not want fascination with the texts to overshadow the important issue – namely Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Wittgenstein wanted the presentation of his ideas to reinforce his view of philosophy, but unlike some recent commentators of his work, I do not believe that he presented his ideas in a way that requires an ingenious mode of interpretation. When a reader understands his conception of philosophy, it will be a straightforward matter to appreciate why the ideas are presented as they are in the texts. My proposal is that a proper appreciation of the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* will make it easier to read the texts and help us to gain a better understanding of his ideas through the style in which they are written.

One of the reasons why Wittgenstein's philosophy is so difficult to understand is because it differs from traditional philosophy. This has been a major cause of misinterpretations. Problems arise if the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* are interpreted from the standpoint of traditional philosophy. In particular it is easy for interpreters to beg the question against his challenge to traditional philosophy when their rejection of his challenge is based on the very presuppositions that he attempts to criticise. Although the texts do not require an ingenious hermeneutic strategy, effort is required to understand the books on their own terms, from an internal standpoint. This involves a simple hermeneutic circle, insofar as we must understand how the texts are to be read by reading the instructions in the text. In other words we must pay attention to what Wittgenstein says in the texts about his own philosophy and his own style of presentation and appreciate the comparisons

he makes between his philosophy and traditional philosophy.[3] When I discuss available literature I concentrate on commentators who have used these considerations to understand the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* and I omit or criticise commentators who read the texts without taking account of Wittgenstein's instructions. In effect I use this hermeneutic strategy as a benchmark for deciding which commentators to discuss in my thesis. I do not omit commentators simply because they are unsympathetic to Wittgenstein's views, but I do omit them if their lack of sympathy for his project means that they systematically misinterpret his views.

I believe that Wittgenstein needed to present his ideas in a way that would distinguish them from the traditional format of philosophical writing. His texts do not present ordinary ideas through an unusual mode of presentation. Instead the revolutionary character of his ideas demands an appropriately unusual presentation. His intention was to give his text a physiognomy that matched his ideas. However, he was not entirely satisfied with any of his attempts to publish his work. The prefaces to both books contain remarks indicating that he felt the expression of his ideas was unsatisfactory but he did not have the resources to improve this. The task of interpretation is in part to understand what Wittgenstein felt that he had conveyed successfully and what he felt that he had not.

Although I aim to be sympathetic to Wittgenstein's intentions my primary concern is to extract a robust account of his philosophy. I endeavour to make a contribution to current and future philosophical understanding, rather than a contribution to literary criticism, history of ideas or biography. My interpretation highlights connections and ideas that Wittgenstein himself may not have explicitly considered, so it may not be appropriate to claim that it was his *intention* to express these views, but nonetheless it is appropriate to attribute these views to him. The task of exegesis is compounded as it involves not simply an interpretation of a text, but interpretation of the changes in Wittgenstein's thought over time. For this reason it is not a simple matter of prioritising what Wittgenstein thought or intended, because his views about the *Tractatus* changed. I hope to make sense of what Wittgenstein thought he had achieved when he

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[3] I discuss these considerations in more detail in chapter 2.

wrote the *Tractatus*, and what he subsequently believed was the problem with the *Tractatus*. This is unashamedly an interpretation from a contemporary perspective – it takes into account the assumption that the *Tractatus* is flawed and looks back at the *Tractatus* from a post-*Investigations* vantage point. Many aspects of Wittgenstein's thought change over the course of his career, including certain aspects of his conception of philosophy, however I argue that his central ambition and fundamental ideas were constant. It makes sense to emphasise this in order to convince philosophers who have no interest in Wittgenstein exegesis that they should appreciate the force of his central ideas and not be distracted by other less significant debates.

The most obvious obstacle for my thesis is the fact that the say-show distinction is not explicitly mentioned in the *Investigations*. My exegetical strategy to deal with this is as follows: we know that the *Tractatus* is crucial for understanding the *Investigations*, so if I can demonstrate that the say-show distinction is crucial for understanding the *Tractatus* it follows that the say-show distinction is also crucial for understanding the *Investigations*. The task then remains to establish whether the say-show distinction is important for the *Investigations* because it is rejected or because it is retained, but either way the significance of the say-show distinction for the *Investigations* is still not appreciated by most commentators. My thesis corrects this neglect and in doing so provides a valuable new interpretation of the *Investigations*.

3 Context

There have already been many attempts to offer groundbreaking interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy, including several recent publications that have not yet reached wide circulation, and are in the early stages of critical review.[4] Nonetheless my interpretation fulfils a need that is significant and insufficiently explored. With only a few exceptions, all of which are discussed in this thesis, recent interpretations have dealt either with the *Tractatus* or with the

[4] E.g. Eli Friedlander (2001), Matthew Ostrow (2002).

Investigations, rather than both.[5] In what follows I demonstrate that interpretations which do give an account of the relationship between the two texts have not provided an adequate interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy – one which includes the role of the say-show distinction properly understood.[6] In particular, my interpretation combats the common view that the failure of the *Tractatus* is the result of the incoherence of the say-show distinction.

My view is that the common inclination to treat the say-show distinction as a substantive doctrine is the main reason that philosophers assume it to be incoherent. It has also led to speculation that Wittgenstein was committed to numerous unworkable metaphysical doctrines. I see this as one instance of a more general problem, which is that many interpretations assume the importance of Wittgenstein's work to be his contribution to specific philosophical disputes. Widespread misunderstanding of his central aims has led philosophers to attribute doctrines and theories to Wittgenstein – such as realism, anti-realism, linguistic idealism, solipsism, logical atomism, behaviourism and a host of other substantive positions, (see Hacker 2002, 4). Such misunderstanding is symptomatic of the fact that, although Wittgenstein's aim was to introduce a revolutionary conception of philosophy, the revolution has still not occurred. It is assumed that Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophical debates is in the form of doctrines and theories because his work is still read from the standpoint of traditional philosophy. A new interpretation is needed which will indicate why Wittgenstein's philosophy needs to be read from an entirely different standpoint if it is to have the revolutionary effect that is long overdue.

I have claimed that Wittgenstein offers an alternative to the traditional conception of philosophy. Although he does not explicitly use this term, he did suggest: "one might say that the subject we are dealing with is one of the heirs of the subject that used to be called "philosophy" (*Blue and Brown Books* p.28). Used very loosely 'traditional philosophy' could simply mean any philosophy that differs from Wittgenstein's conception so further description is needed to make the claim informative. Rather than attempt to provide a strict definition which

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[5] E.g. Oswald Hanfling (1989), Michael Hodges (1990). Interpretations which do deal with both include Alice Crary & Rupert Read (eds.) (2000).

categorises the widely divergent features of various philosophical practices, I will illustrate my point with a live example. David Oderberg has recently called for a return to what he calls "philosophical traditionalism", claiming that "philosophical traditionalism can be seen as both a state of mind and a set of doctrines" (Oderberg 2002, 42). A sample from his manifesto for philosophical traditionalism includes the following requirements for philosophy in general:

> The possibility of arriving at distinctively philosophical truths; the possibility of using systematic *a priori* reasoning to arrive at those truths; the role of philosophy not simply to arrive at this or that truth, but at the correct system of philosophical truth. (Oderberg 2002, 42)

This is only one example of the type of philosophy targeted by Wittgenstein. Not all traditional philosophers would accept Oderberg's faith in an *a priori* methodology, but although they may disagree with his methodological principles, many would subscribe to his aims. Traditional philosophy aims to solve problems by adding philosophical truths to a body of knowledge. Of those who do not agree that philosophy can aim at distinctively philosophical truths many would believe that the answers to philosophical problems are to come from scientific truths. Few would imagine that there can be a distinctively philosophical enterprise that is not in the business of discovering truths.

A particularly distinctive feature of traditional philosophy is the belief that philosophical problems can be solved when we come to know something that we do not presently know. Another way of describing this is the idea that problems are solved by explaining what we know in terms of something that we do not know, for example explaining personal identity in terms of quasi-memory, rather than ordinary memory. Although many philosophers may reject this type of explanation it is usually because they refuse to accept speculative metaphysical postulates – for example quasi-memory, possible worlds and qualia. However they do accept that philosophy needs to make true claims and offer new information that will solve the problems. Much of contemporary philosophy in anglo-american universities is marked by the demand that the explanations should be commensurate with the findings of natural science, hence although it is often

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[6] E.g. K.T. Fann (1969), John Koethe (1996), Dale Jacquette (1998).

not acceptable to postulate philosophical truths about non-empirical entities, it is perfectly acceptable to think that the solution to philosophical problems will be materialist or reductionist discoveries and in principle accessible to science. In contrast to presuppositions such as these about the task of philosophy, Wittgenstein proposes a conception of philosophy which offers methods for treating philosophical problems which do not involve theories, doctrines and true claims, whether empirical or *a priori*.

In particular one of the most important features of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, properly understood, is that it establishes a distinction between philosophy and science. The debate surrounding the relationship between philosophy and science is not addressed in my thesis, but my conclusions have significance when considered in this wider context. Contemporary philosophy is dominated by approaches that do not accept a distinction between philosophy and science, such as Cognitivism and Quine's Naturalised Epistemology. A clear statement of such a view is made by Keith Lehrer:

> We contend that the distinction between philosophy and theoretical science is a bogus distinction, whether viewed historically or systematically. (Lehrer 1990, 7)

A robust account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy will strengthen resistance to the view that philosophical enquiry is ultimately reducible to scientific enquiry. It will show that philosophy has distinct aims and methods. There is also potential to pursue the idea that the methods of philosophy should be closer to the model of literature than science – although this also forms no part of my argument in this thesis.

Some critics of Wittgenstein have argued that he offers only a negative philosophy – a philosophy that is quietist and defeatist. If Wittgenstein's ideas are to gain wider influence it is important to counter such criticism by demonstrating that his is also a positive philosophy, although it involves no substantive doctrines, whether empirical or *a priori*. I do not offer an explicit defence against these criticisms in this thesis, but instead lay the groundwork for such a defence by providing a robust account of his positive conception of philosophy. My account of his work will establish that, in both the *Tractatus* and the

Investigations, the outcome of a philosophical task and the overall aim of philosophy are positive achievements, not merely negative and deflationary.

4 Chapter Summary

In Chapter 2, I give a neutral exegesis of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. This is an exposition of the main ideas with minimal interpretation or commentary. I then identify the aspects that demand special consideration, particularly the internal guidelines for how the texts are to be understood. This lays the groundwork for my critical discussion of commentators' readings in chapters 3 and 4 and for my own interpretation in chapters 5 to 7.

In Chapter 3, I evaluate available interpretations of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. I argue that the most common type of interpretation is incorrect because it treats the say-show distinction as a doctrine, albeit a special type of ineffable doctrine. I also criticise the opposing type of interpretation on the grounds that it treats the say-show distinction as a pseudo-doctrine. I argue that the most promising type of interpretation is one that attempts to treat the say-show distinction as an elucidation, rather than a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine.

In Chapter 4, I evaluate available interpretations of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*. Using the interpretations from Chapter 3, I consider in each case whether commentators believe that the say-show distinction is retained or rejected in the *Investigations*. I argue that only an interpretation that treats the distinction as elucidatory can successfully claim that the distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. I concede that if one accepts the view that the say-show distinction is a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine, then there is a strong case to say that the distinction is rejected, or has no role, in the *Investigations*.

In Chapter 5, I present my own interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. Against the idea that the distinction is a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine I argue that the distinction has an elucidatory role. I develop a more comprehensive account than the available elucidatory interpretation, by demonstrating that the distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy.

In Chapter 6, I discuss why Wittgenstein claimed in the *Investigations* that the *Tractatus* contained "grave mistakes". I argue that the say-show distinction was not a grave mistake in the *Tractatus* and that Wittgenstein did not reject the Tractarian conception of philosophy. I argue that he considered the failure of the *Tractatus* to be its reliance upon certain traditional presuppositions, and that these mistakes were exposed and dispelled in the *Investigations*.

In Chapter 7, I present my interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*. I argue that Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* is fundamentally the same as his conception in the *Tractatus*. In both cases the say-show distinction is the basis for this conception.

In Chapter 8, I sum up my argument and consider some implications for further study, either by myself or by others. These include the following projects: an application of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy to contemporary problems; a defence of his conception of philosophy against opposing conceptions, particularly the prevailing trend towards scientism; a clarification of the similarities and differences between philosophy and science and between philosophy and literature; a historical study of the influences that may have contributed to Wittgenstein's say-show distinction and a historical study of the influence that the distinction has subsequently had on other philosophers.

Chapter 2: The *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*

Content

1 Introduction

In this chapter I give an exegetical overview of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. The task is made difficult by stylistic features of Wittgenstein's texts. The remarks of the *Tractatus* are spare and aphoristic, so any attempt to paraphrase them risks distortion by adding ideas. The remarks of the *Investigations* are dense and unsystematic, so any attempt to summarise them risks distortion by omitting ideas and creating a false impression of order. My aim is to present the texts in as neutral a way as possible, summarising the main features of the texts, following the original order of remarks where possible, and keeping my own commentary to a minimum. At this stage I do not focus on the issue of the say-show distinction, nor do I interpret the texts in the light of Wittgenstein's remarks for understanding the text. Indeed one aim of this chapter is to identify those features of the texts which any interpretation should be expected to address. These considerations, summed up as *desiderata* in the final section, will provide the reader with a basis for comparing available interpretations with each other, in chapters 3 and 4, and with my own interpretation in chapters 5 to 7.

2 The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

The stated aim of the *Tractatus* is "to draw a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts" (TLP Preface p.3). This limit – the limit between propositions with sense, and nonsense – will be used to show that

[1] I follow conventional referencing for the remarks of the *Tractatus* by using TLP followed by the number of the remark e.g. TLP 4.1212. I use the Pears & McGuinness translation unless otherwise indicated.

[2] I use the same format as the *Tractatus*, in a departure from conventional referencing, for the remarks of the *Investigations*. I use PI followed by the number of the remark e.g. PI 109, rather than the customary notation of a paragraph mark e.g. §109.

the problems of philosophy are posed because "the logic of our language is misunderstood" (TLP Preface p.3). To this end, the seven main propositions of the *Tractatus* give an outline for an account of language – an account of what can and cannot be said in propositions with sense:

> The world is all that is the case. (TLP 1)
> What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs. (TLP 2)
> A logical picture of facts is a thought. (TLP 3)
> A thought is a proposition with a sense. (TLP 4)
> A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself). (TLP 5)
> The general form of a truth-function is $[\overline{p}, \overline{\xi}, N(\overline{\xi})]$. This is the general form of a proposition. (TLP 6)
> What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence. (TLP 7)

As a brief overview, the seven remarks build up into an account of language in the following way: the world consists of facts. Facts are existing states of affairs. Facts can be 'pictured'. That a fact can be pictured means that it can be thought. A thought is a proposition with sense. A proposition can represent its sense if it is a truth-function of elementary propositions. The general form of a truth-function is the essence of all propositions – what all propositions with sense have in common – hence it is the general form of the proposition. We are not able to say anything with signs that do not have general propositional form; when we are tempted to do so, we must instead remain silent. This is why Wittgenstein says that the whole sense of the book can be summed up as: "what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (TLP Preface p.3).

I now look at each of the seven major propositions in turn and discuss in more detail what Wittgenstein says about language and philosophy. With the exception of TLP 7, Wittgenstein follows each of the major propositions with a series of remarks that comment on the major proposition. The remarks are numbered to indicate their relative importance. For reasons of space I deal mainly with the higher numbers (e.g. 2.1, 2.2) and, for convenience, I use a collective term, e.g. 'the 2.1s' to include a particular remark (e.g. TLP 2.1) and all the remarks that are comments on that remark (e.g. TLP 2.11, 2.12, 2.13).

"The world is all that is the case" (TLP 1).

The 1s are a much shorter section than the others (with the exception of TLP 7 which consists of a single remark). Whereas other sections contain anything between 70 and 150 remarks, the 1s contain only seven.

The 1s introduce an important distinction between facts and things, a distinction which indicates the significance of logical form. We are told elsewhere that objects (things) make up the substance of the world (TLP 2.021), but the 1.1s state that the world does not consist of things, it consists of facts (TLP 1.1). This point hinges on the word "all" in the first remark – the requirement for totality is crucial because, as we shall see, a totality of objects cannot constitute a world, whereas a totality of facts can. The requirement for totality rests on Wittgenstein's conception of logical form. We know that facts are in logical space (TLP 1.13). We learn elsewhere that when a particular place, or possibility, in logical space is determined, then at the same time it reveals something about the rest of logical space (TLP 3.42). This is why the notion of *totality* is important in the 1s – that the world consists of the totality of facts in logical space means that it does not just consist of all that is the case, but at the same time it determines all that is not the case (TLP 1.12). If the world were the totality of things, then there would be no role for logical space. A list of all existing things would reveal nothing about the possibility of other non-existing things. Whereas a list of all the facts that are the case reveals the facts that are possible, but are not the case (TLP 2.05) – this is the significance of the totality that logical form provides.

"What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs" (TLP 2).

Although the 1s say that the world is the totality of facts they leave open the question what is a fact? In TLP 2 Wittgenstein gives the first formulation: a fact is "the existence of states of affairs". Almost 80 remarks follow this statement, which fall into three sections. TLP 2.01-2.063 describe how objects combine to form possible facts (states of affairs). The 2.1s state that we 'picture' facts, and the 2.2s state that pictures of facts have logical form in common with facts. Throughout the 2s Wittgenstein emphasises the role of logic – particularly the

idea that logic deals with what is essential, rather than what is accidental (TLP 2.0121).

Wittgenstein tells us that a state of affairs is a combination of objects (TLP 2.01). Objects (things) make up the substance of the world (TLP 2.021) – they give it both form and content (TLP 2.025). The form of the world is the possibility of objects combining with one another in different structures (TLP 2.033). The form is essential and unalterable (TLP 2.026 & 2.0271). The content of the world is the *existing* states of affairs (facts) (TLP 2.05), which are accidental and changing. In other words form is the possible combinations of objects, and content is the existing combinations of objects. But, as we saw above, logical form means that when certain possible combinations exist in reality, others do not exist (TLP 2.06). Hence the world is all that is the case and determines all that is not the case (TLP 1.12): "the sum total of reality is the world" (TLP 2.063).

We are not told what objects are, but we learn that the important difference between objects and states of affairs is determined by logical form. Objects are simple (TLP 2.02) whereas states of affairs have structure (TLP 2.032). As form is the possibility of structure (TLP 2.033) objects cannot represent logical form, except when they are configured in a state of affairs.

The world has been discussed thoroughly – it consists of simple objects, which are combined in existing states of affairs (facts) and the possibility of objects occurring in states of affairs is logical form. Now Wittgenstein turns from discussing the world to discuss how we 'picture' the facts of the world.

The 2.1s and 2.2s discuss pictures. A picture is made up of elements. We are not told what these elements are, only that they are related in a determinate way (TLP 2.14). As with objects, this is because the elements are secondary to the structure (TLP 2.0122) – where the possibility of structure is logical form (TLP 2.033). This is why "every picture is *at the same time* a logical one" (TLP 2.182). Logical form gives pictures a certain relation to reality (TLP 2.223). A picture must have something in common with reality in order to depict reality (TLP 2.17), what it has in common is logical form – "i.e. the form of reality" (TLP 2.18). This is because a picture represents a *possible* state of affairs, it does not determine whether the state of affairs pictured exists or not. This means that a picture is

independent of its truth or falsity (TLP 2.22). This also indicates that logico-pictorial form tells us nothing about what exists – it only enables us to compare our pictures with reality, and thereby say something about what exists.

"A logical picture of facts is a thought" (TLP 3).

We have learned that facts can be pictured and that every picture of a fact has logico-pictorial form. Now Wittgenstein tells us that if a fact can be pictured, this means it can be thought – it is thinkable (TLP 3.001). He then gives a detailed account of how a thought finds expression in a proposition with sense.

In 3.001-3.05 Wittgenstein discusses thought. In the case of pictures, a picture represents a *possible* state of affairs, a true picture represents an *existing* state of affairs and a false picture represents a *non-existing* state of affairs. Now we see that a thought is a picture that represents a possible state of affairs, a true thought is a picture that represents an existing state of affairs and a false thought is a picture that represents a non-existing state of affairs. Wittgenstein told us that the world is the totality of existing states of affairs, so we can see why he says that the picture of the world is the totality of true thoughts (TLP 3.01). In the next section he will claim that the totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (TLP 4.11), but first he must explain how thoughts are related to propositions.

So far Wittgenstein has taken us from facts to pictures and from pictures to thoughts. Now he takes us from thoughts to propositions. In the 3.1s Wittgenstein discusses the idea that "in a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses" (TLP 3.1). This point rests on a distinction that is discussed in the 3.3s: the fact that a proposition is both a sign and a symbol. Insofar as the proposition is perceptible it is a propositional sign (TLP 3.11), but insofar as the proposition is the expression of a thought, it is a symbol: "I call any part of a proposition that characterises its sense an expression (or symbol)" (TLP 3.31).

A proposition with sense is the expression of a thought, when the thought is a picture that represents a possible state of affairs. A true proposition [is an expression of a thought that is a picture that] represents an existing state of affairs.

A false proposition [is an expression of a thought that is a picture that] represents a non-existing state of affairs.

In the 3.2s Wittgenstein talks about the correspondence between the elements of a proposition and the objects of a thought. Although he leaves the objects of thought unspecified, the elements of a proposition are 'simple signs' or 'names' (TLP 3.202). A name represents an object (TLP 3.22) when "the configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign" (TLP 3.21) this only occurs when the thought and the proposition share logical form.

In the 3.3s Wittgenstein emphasises the order of dependence that is implicit in the previous remarks. A name has meaning only in the context of a proposition with sense (TLP 3.3). This parallels a previous point – just as an object only counts as an object in the context of a situation (TLP 2.0121), words only count as words when they appear in propositions (TLP 2.0122). This order of dependence is a reminder that logical form is primary: the possibility of structure is more important than the elements in the structure. The 3.3s also introduce the important new distinction between sign and symbol. Signs are what can be perceived of a symbol (TLP 3.32) and they are arbitrary (TLP 3.322). The symbol is what is essential: it is the underlying sense, given by logical form (TLP 3.344). This distinction is important, firstly because philosophical confusions can be caused by looking at the sign rather than the symbol (TLP 3.324). Secondly, the idea that the symbol rather than the sign is essential (TLP 3.31) is connected to the idea that the essence of all propositions with sense can be expressed as the general form of a proposition (TLP 3.312).

In the 3.4s Wittgenstein returns to the importance of logical form, just as he did in the discussion of states of affairs and the discussion of pictures in the 2s. He makes the same point as before – that when a proposition determines a place in logical space "the force of the proposition reaches through the whole of logical space" (TLP 3.42).

"A thought is a proposition with a sense" (TLP 4).

In the 1s Wittgenstein stated that the totality of facts is the world. Now he can state that the totality of propositions is language (TLP 4.001). As we saw in the 1s, the reference to 'totality' hinges on the idea of logical form. Language and world share logical form. The 1s, 2s and 3s describe the relation between language and world. Now, in the 4s, Wittgenstein uses the account of language he has outlined to discuss various problems that arise through misunderstandings of language. He also talks explicitly about the role of philosophy and the say-show distinction.

Included in TLP 4.001-4.0641 is a discussion of the idea that a proposition with a sense, a thought, a logical picture and a fact are all equivalent because, although they have different elements, they all share the same logical form: "they are all in a sense one" (TLP 4.014). It is not the elements, whether names or objects, that are essential to the sense, it is the logical form. In the 4.1s we learn that logical form can be shown but cannot be said. For this reason the formal properties of objects and facts – logical properties and relations – cannot be said in language but are shown in language.

The 4.1s discuss the relation between propositions and reality (the existence and non-existence of states of affairs). Here we look at what is *actually* the case and not the case. The 4.2s deal with how sense is first determined by what is *possibly* the case (possibilities of existence and non-existence of states of affairs). In the 4.1s Wittgenstein claims that the role of philosophy is not to state true propositions, i.e. not to say what is actually the case, as this is the work of the natural sciences. The role of philosophy is to clarify propositions, i.e. to make clear what it is possible to say in propositions that have sense.

The 4.2s break propositions down into basic units of sense: elementary propositions. We looked at how names are arranged to form a proposition, now we look at the way elementary propositions are *combined* to produced sense. Each elementary proposition represents a possibility and when several truth-possibilities are combined they represent a complex sense. The 4.3s discuss the truth-possibilities of elementary propositions and the 4.4s discuss truth-conditions of truth-possibilities of elementary propositions.

In the 4.4s Wittgenstein discusses the notions of tautology and contradiction (TLP 4.46–4.4661). He claims that "propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing" (TLP 4.461).

When Wittgenstein reaches the 4.5s the background material has been put in place: in the 1s and 2s he discussed objects in states of affairs. In the 3s he discussed pictures of states of affairs (thoughts), in the 4s he discussed the perceptible expression of thoughts (propositions). Now he is in a position to offer a positive account of the limits of what can be said. Wittgenstein proposes to give an account of the most general propositional form – in other words the necessary and sufficient criterion for something's being a proposition in any sign language. It will be the underlying form of any possible expression of sense, and anything that has the general propositional form will express a sense (TLP 4.5). In this way the general propositional form will determine once and for all the limits of what can be said in propositions with sense.

"A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself)" (TLP 5).

The 5s are where Wittgenstein develops his account of general propositional form. This is the largest section of the *Tractatus* – totalling 150 remarks. It is a tightly constructed logical argument which builds up from elementary propositions to the general form of a proposition.

A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions (TLP 5); thus elementary propositions are truth-arguments of propositions (TLP 5.01). Whereas elementary propositions are independent of one another (TLP 5.134), complex propositions share truth-grounds with one another (TLP 5.11). We can see this by looking at the internal relations between the structures of propositions (TLP 5.131). Wittgenstein introduces the notion of an 'operation' as a way of giving prominence to the internal relations between the structures of propositions (TLP 5.21); an operation is "what has to be done to the one proposition to make the other out of it" (TLP 5.23). An example of an operation is negation (TLP 5.2341). Operations do not *say* anything (TLP 5.25), instead they *show* the difference between the forms of propositions (TLP 5.24 and 5.241). A truth-function is the

result of a series of operations (truth-operations) which takes one or more elementary propositions as bases (TLP 5.234). So, propositions are the result of truth-operations on elementary propositions (TLP 5.3).

Wittgenstein introduces truth-operations as a step on the way to the general form of a proposition – he gives a single operation that can produce every truth-function when applied successively to elementary propositions (TLP 5.5). This is an indication that the general form of a proposition is essentially concerned with the internal, logical relations between propositions, again an emphasis on logical form. Right from the beginning, Wittgenstein made it clear that every thing that counts as a picture has logical form in common with what it depicts. It is therefore consistent with this position that the general form of a proposition will be based on his conception of logical form.

"The general form of a truth-function is $[\overline{p}, \overline{\xi}, N(\overline{\xi})]$. This is the general form of a proposition" (TLP 6).

The general form of a proposition takes the set of all elementary propositions ($\overline{p}$); then takes a selection of those elementary propositions as a variable ($\overline{\xi}$), then negates all the values of that variable $N(\overline{\xi})$. See (TLP 5.501 and TLP 5.502). The result of this operation on elementary propositions will be a new proposition, but the point is that this proposition can be used as a base for the operation to be repeated any number of times. Given the totality of elementary propositions and this most general principle we can determine every possible proposition. Thus, every proposition is represented by the general form of a proposition: every proposition is the result of a series of operations on a selection of the totality of elementary propositions. Furthermore, if something is not represented by this operation then it is not a proposition. This is how the general form of a proposition determines the limits of what can be said. Following TLP 6, the 6s discuss numerous implications which result if we accept this formula as the general form of a proposition.

In the 6.1s we are told that if we accept the general form of a proposition then the propositions of logic are not really propositions – they say nothing (TLP

6.11) as they have no content (TLP 6.111). They do not picture possible states of affairs.

In the 6.2s we are told that the propositions of mathematics are also not propositions – they do not express a thought (TLP 6.21).

In the 6.3s we are told that many so-called 'laws' do not have *a priori* necessity, as the only necessity is logical necessity (TLP 6.37 & 6.375). The laws of causality, induction and conservation, for example are not laws about the world, they are laws about descriptions of the world (TLP 6.34).

The 6.4s explore the implications of the idea that, if we accept the general form of a proposition, then all propositions are of equal value (TLP 6.4). If this is correct then there can be no propositions of ethics or aesthetics (TLP 6.42 & 6.421) because these propositions would have to represent a higher value than other propositions.

The 6.5s look at the implications of the general form of the proposition for philosophy. This section returns to the point Wittgenstein made in the Preface, when he said that one of his achievements was to show "how little is achieved when [the problems of philosophy] are solved" (TLP Preface p.4). The role of philosophy is to clear up misunderstandings of the logic of language. The 6.5s show that the problems of philosophy vanish because the general form of a proposition lets us see that in such problems once the confusion has been seen, then there is simply nothing to be said. The problem is that, if this conclusion is true, it apparently creates self-reflexive incoherence. The remarks of the *Tractatus* appear to be propositional signs, but in fact they do not have general propositional form and hence do not picture a possible state of affairs. This means that the remarks of the *Tractatus* are nonsense. If the remarks are nonsense then Wittgenstein's expression of his account of language is nonsense. TLP 6.54 appears to be an admission of this paradox.

"What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (TLP 7).

The final remark of the *Tractatus* has a different character to the previous major remarks. It does not add anything to the theory of language, but appears to ask us to choose silence rather than speak nonsense. The self-reflexive paradox created

by propositions 1-6 should remind us that Wittgenstein's initial warning was that this book "is not a textbook" (TLP Preface p.3). The question then arises: how are we to understand this book?

3 The *Philosophical Investigations*

The *Investigations* has two parts (PI 1 to PI 693 and PI I to PI XIV) the latter in a less revised state. There is debate amongst commentators about whether the material from part two should be treated as part of the whole. I make reference to points in part two where they help to clarify remarks made in part one. Wittgenstein tells us that in the *Philosophical Investigations*, his thoughts are presented as an "album" of "remarks" (PI Preface p.vii), and that he would like these remarks "to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (PI Preface p.viii). These points go some way to explaining his unusual style of writing. It is further explained when we look at his approach to philosophy. Most of his remarks about his own philosophy are clustered in PI 89-133, although some appear elsewhere in the text. We learn that his work brings together a collection of philosophical investigations from a 16 year period (PI Preface p.vii). He tells us that the general type of investigation he undertakes is "a grammatical one" (PI 90). This type of investigation has characteristic aims and methods which he describes, but mostly demonstrates through examples. His warning that "the series of examples can be broken off" (PI 133) is a reminder that he wishes others to have thoughts of their own. There are methods for dealing with problems to be learnt from the *Investigations*, but not a doctrine to be received.

> (In giving all these examples I am not aiming at some kind of completeness, some classification of psychological concepts. They are only meant to enable the reader to shift for himself when he encounters conceptual difficulties.) (PI p.206)

The aim of the book is not merely to showcase Wittgenstein's philosophical achievements. It is to *teach others* "how to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (PI 464).

A characteristic feature of the *Investigations* is that it does not just contain the author's voice. Instead, many of the numbered remarks are effectively a

dialogue between Wittgenstein and interlocutors. As a consequence many statements in the text do not present Wittgenstein's opinion, but are examples of the confusions that Wittgenstein calls the "raw material" of philosophy, namely "what we are 'tempted to say'" (PI 254). This is indicated in each case by phrases like: "I want to say …" (PI 452) "perhaps you will say …" (PI 184).

Wittgenstein says that his investigations cover many subjects: "the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness and other things" (PI Preface p.vii). In the following sections I use this list as subject headings, to look at how these subjects are dealt with by Wittgenstein as examples of philosophical confusion and misunderstanding. He gives voice to the philosophical problems, then deflates or dissolves them. In each case he shows that the answers we give to the problems are nonsense and the resolution lies in a different place – in a perspicuous representation of grammar.

Meaning

According to Wittgenstein, a certain "general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible" (PI 5). In other words, philosophy suffers from confused assumptions about meaning which make it difficult to dissolve problems in the philosophy of language. The general notion of meaning he refers to is a 'picture' of the essence of language which assumes that "every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands" (PI 1). The opening part of the *Investigations* (approximately PI 1-65) critically explores this picture. Wittgenstein does this in three ways: he unpacks the ideas that this picture leads us to have about meaning, e.g. that "words in language name objects" (PI 1), that "every word in language signifies something" (PI 13) and that "a name ought really to signify a simple" (PI 39). At the same time he uses a variety of methods to undermine these ideas and reveal them to be confusions. E.g. in the above examples, he undermines the idea that every word *names* an object (PI 26-7), that every word *signifies* (PI 10-15) and that reality is composed of *simples* (PI 46-50). Also at the same time he uses examples to encourage us to look and see how

meaning works in language e.g. that a word has "a family of meanings" (PI 77) and "for a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (PI 43).

To disperse the 'fog' generated by the general notion of meaning, Wittgenstein's main method is to "study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of words" (PI 5). These primitive kinds of application are what Wittgenstein calls "language-games" (PI 7). When Wittgenstein proposes to "apply the method" he says "let us consider a language-game for which this account is really valid" (PI 48).

Throughout the *Investigations* Wittgenstein returns to the issue of meaning at various points, ending with a reminder – the final remark of the *Investigations* – that "nothing is more wrongheaded than calling meaning a mental activity!" (PI 693).

Propositions

The opening remarks of the *Investigations* (PI 1-20) are about words and meaning. The difference between words and sentences, and the issue of sense, first arises in PI 20. It appears that words have meaning and sentences have sense (PI 39), but a sign, such as 'R' can function as either a word or as a sentence depending on the context (PI 49). The point Wittgenstein makes is that in the case of sense, just as with meaning, we should look to the use a sign has in our language (PI 20). There is a multiplicity of different types of sentences (PI 23) because they fulfil a variety of different roles in our language.

In PI 65 he gives voice to an objection – that his approach is unsatisfactory because it fails to fulfil the most important task, namely to identify the general form of a proposition and the essence of language: "what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language" (PI 65). This had been the task of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein's response is to deny that such a task is needed:

> Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, – but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. (PI 65)

Wittgenstein's discussion of propositions follows on from this remark and forms a rough cluster of remarks between PI 65 and PI 137. His main point is that different types of language use are related by a "family resemblance" (PI 67) and it is in virtue of this that we call them all 'language' (PI 65). "What we call 'sentence' and 'language' has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structure more or less related to one another" (PI 108).

Wittgenstein diagnoses the sorts of misunderstanding that has led philosophers to assume that propositions have mysterious characteristics:

> One person might say "a proposition is the most ordinary thing in the world" and another: "a proposition – that's something very queer!" and the latter is unable simply to look and see how propositions really work. The forms we use in expressing ourselves about propositions and thought stand in his way. (PI 93)

To avoid this sort of mistake, which fails to see the ordinary use of words like 'proposition', Wittgenstein proposes a method that can be used for other philosophical problems as well:

> When philosophers use a word – "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", "name" – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (PI 116)

In PI 134-137 Wittgenstein conducts a short investigation into the notion of the general form of a proposition. While the proposition "this is how things are" had, perhaps in the *Tractatus*, been treated as an important discovery about the essence of language (PI 134), now Wittgenstein reveals that the remark has a meaning only insofar as it can be used as an ordinary sentence (PI 134). It has no special status as a philosophical claim because it has no application in our language: "to say that this proposition agrees (or disagrees) with reality would be obvious nonsense" (PI 134). Having revealed that this philosophical claim is merely a

confusion, Wittgenstein reminds the reader that we already have "a concept of what a proposition is, of what we take 'proposition' to mean" (PI 135).

One of the most important points that Wittgenstein makes about propositions is the suggestion that our mistaken conception of propositions is one of the confusions that leads to "the subliming of our whole account of logic" (PI 94). This is the next subject for consideration.

Logic

In the opening part of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein mentions that the urge to specify exactly what counts as a name "springs from a tendency to sublime the logic of language" (PI 38). Most of his other remarks concerning logic are clustered between PI 81 and PI 133. Wittgenstein investigates the idea that philosophers, including himself in the *Tractatus*, have given accounts of language which assume that logic is a "calculus of definite rules" (PI 81). His point is that this is a serious misunderstanding: "in philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game" (PI 81).

He simultaneously undermines the idea that rules could possibly function in the way that we imagined and shows that we can give explanations without such a rigid a conception of rules (PI 82-88). He returns to the subject of rules later in the *Investigations* (PI 198-208); there he demonstrates that any calculus of rules can be interpreted in different ways and it is impossible to guarantee the way that it will be applied in different situations (PI 201). Furthermore he undermines the idea that obeying a rule involves a particular mental state. He argues that obeying a rule is a public practice, not a private experience (PI 202). After dissolving the idea that logic is an ideal set of rules, he asks why we were led to imagine that logic must have such an idealised structure: "there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth – a universal significance (PI 89); "we want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic" (PI 101). Wittgenstein shows that the sublime conception of logic that we construct, based on these misunderstandings, is perfect and ideal, but for these very reasons it is utterly irrelevant to our real language.

> We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. (PI 107)

Wittgenstein's point is that the rigour of logic was a picture that "held us captive" (PI 115) insofar as the "the crystalline purity of logic, was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement" (PI 107). His critique of logical investigation contrasts with own style of investigation which he calls "grammatical" rather than logical (PI 90).

The Foundations of Mathematics

Although Wittgenstein states that the *Investigations* deals with this subject, he actually says very little about the foundations of mathematics, except his remarks on continuing a numerical series in PI 143-155 and PI 185-190. This is possibly because most of his ideas on this theme were channelled into *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*.

Understanding

The main discussion of understanding is clustered around remarks PI 138-191, although Wittgenstein returns to the subject throughout the book. Wittgenstein raises the idea that when we *understand* the meaning of a word we seem to grasp the meaning "in a flash" (PI 138). This makes us think that our understanding of a word is different to the use of the word extended in time (PI 138). We get the idea that understanding is a 'picture' of the meaning present in our minds and then pursue the question of how this 'fits' with the use of the word (PI 139). Thus there appear to be two criteria for understanding: the 'picture' in our mind and the 'application' (PI 141).

Wittgenstein 'reminds' us (PI 140), that the picture in the mind is inessential (PI 141) for two reasons: a word can give rise to several different pictures in the mind (PI 140) and the picture can be used in several different ways (PI 139). However, when the picture drops out as inessential, "the application is still a criterion of understanding" (PI 146). Although, as application is the part

that the word plays in the language-game (PI 11), there are many different forms that application can take.

In PI 143 he introduces a language-game, where person B comes to understand a formation rule over a period of time and it makes no sense to talk about the specific moment where B suddenly understood. This contrasts with the language-game in PI 151, where B suddenly understands the law for the sequence of numbers at a specific moment. Wittgenstein describes lots of different scenarios that would count as understanding, to undermine the mistaken idea that "the understanding itself is a state which is the *source* of the correct use" (PI 146). Our mistake is to imagine "a state of a mental apparatus (perhaps of the brain) by means of which we *explain* the manifestations of that knowledge" (PI 149). He argues that "in the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process" (PI 154). The problem stems from the fact that philosophers "try to get hold of the mental process of understanding which seems to be hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments" (PI 153), when it is precisely the visible accompaniments that are the criteria for understanding: "it is *the circumstances* under which he had such an experience that justify him in saying in such a case that he understands" (PI 155).

States of Consciousness

The second half of part one is a densely interwoven discussion of various states of consciousness. Wittgenstein discusses *sensations* such as pain and colour experience (PI 243-420), and *mental states*, such as expecting and willing (PI 570-693). We have already seen that Wittgenstein undermines the pervasive idea that meaning and understanding are essentially mental states. In his investigations concerning states of consciousness, Wittgenstein's main point is that we are tempted to explain phenomena in terms of inner processes: "when we do philosophy, we should like to hypostatize feelings where there are none. They serve to explain our thoughts to us" (PI 598). But when we look at grammar we realise that the idea of the inner process does no work.

> If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. (PI 293)

In PI 246 Wittgenstein sets up a philosophical problem, "in what sense are my sensations private?" He uses this problem to demonstrate that many of the things we say about inner states are meaningless. In doing so he appeals to a distinction between grammatical and empirical propositions (PI 246-255). In PI 256 Wittgenstein sets up another related problem: whether it is possible to have "a language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand". He investigates this through language-games (PI 258-264). First he asks us to consider an example of a man who keeps a diary of his sensations, using the sign "S". The shortcomings of this are made clear. In PI 270 the example is modified, to give the sign "S" a use – although now we find that it does not have the implications it was originally thought to have. He then uses a number of absurd examples (PI 265-268) to show the problems with the idea that experiences are private.

In PI 243-315 Wittgenstein discusses sensations by using pain as the topic. In PI 316-342 he uses thinking as the topic. In PI 344-363 he discusses a more general list of philosophical problems which are based on misunderstandings of private states of consciousness: understanding (PI 348); pain (PI 350); meaning (PI 358); thinking (PI 361); calculating (PI 364). The general point he makes is that we have a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of mental states which causes confusions in all of these areas:

> It looks to us as if the whole point of communication lay in this: someone else grasps the sense of my words – which is something mental: he as it were takes it into his own mind. If he then does something further with it as well, that is no part of the immediate purpose of language. (PI 363)

In PI 570-693 Wittgenstein discusses numerous mental states: expecting (PI 572); hoping (PI 583); intending (PI 588 and PI 632-660); recognising (PI 602-605); conviction (PI 607); willing and voluntary action (PI 611-631); and attention (PI 665-693). He says that the issue of mental states is often wrongly treated as though it requires an empirical investigation: "seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, willing, are not the subject of psychology *in the same sense* as that in which the

movements of bodies, the phenomena of electricity etc., are the subjects of physics" (PI 571). He insists that we need instead to understand the grammar of these states, for example by asking "what counts as a criterion for anyone's being in such a state?" (PI 572), where the answer must be something that has an application in language, not just a private experience: "an 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria" (PI 580).

Grammar

Towards the end of part one, Wittgenstein brings together many of the topics he has covered, such as meaning, understanding and rule-following, in a general discussion of language (PI 487-569). Central to the subject of language is his conception of grammar.

Early in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein uses the words grammar and language as though they are equivalent: "the word 'number' here shews what place in language, in grammar, we assign to the word" (PI 29). By 'language' Wittgenstein means "language and the actions into which it is woven" (PI 7); "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (PI 19); "the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (PI 23). Moreover, forms of life can be said to be "what has to be accepted, the given" (PI p.226). Thus if grammar is equivalent to language, it is language in this broad sense. This broad conception is why throughout the *Investigations* grammar is shown to have two aspects. It involves both the appearance and the application of language; both the form and the function of words. These two aspects are characterised in one remark as surface grammar and depth grammar respectively: "in the use of words one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'" (PI 664). Surface grammar is described as "what immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word [...] the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use – one might say – that can be taken in by the ear (PI 664). Depth grammar is the actual use of words, the role they play in our language.

Unlike the conception of logic that he rejected earlier, Wittgenstein's conception of grammar is not a rigid schema of rules which determines what can be said in advance of future uses of language.

> Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such and such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs. (PI 496)

The rules of grammar do not dictate how language can be used. The rules of grammar describe the function of language: the rules describe grammar. According to Wittgenstein, grammar is the application of words, but "the application of a word is not everywhere bounded by rules" (PI 84); "the rules of grammar may be called 'arbitrary', if that is to mean that the aim of grammar is nothing but that of the language" (PI 497). He knows that someone will object that this destroys the rigour of logic "this seems to abolish logic, but does not do so" (PI 242). His response is to deflate the idea that this is will make language impossible:

> "So does it depend wholly on our grammar what will be called (logically) possible and what not, - i.e. what that grammar permits?" – But surely that is arbitrary! – Is it arbitrary? – It is not every sentence-like formulation that we know how to do something with, not every technique has an application in our life; and when we are tempted in philosophy to count some quite useless thing as a proposition, that is often because we have not considered its application sufficiently. (PI 520)

The *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein's conception of language in the *Investigations* is notably different to his earlier account of language in the *Tractatus* – particularly in terms of the central shift from logic to grammar. In the Preface to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein says that on his return to philosophy he was "forced to recognise grave mistakes" in what he wrote in the *Tractatus* (PI Preface p.vii). However, rather than merely reject the book he proposes a use for it, namely that his new thoughts "could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking" (PI Preface p.viii).

Wittgenstein makes a number of explicit references to the *Tractatus* in the *Investigations*. He compares "the multiplicity of tools in language and of the ways they are used [...] with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*)" (PI 23). Having shown that it is "impossible to give an account of any primary element" (PI 46) he claims that "my objects (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary

elements" (PI 46). He refers to the *Tractatus* (TLP 5.563) when he describes the mistaken view that logic presents "the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of *possibilities*, which must be common to both world and thought" (PI 97). He uses a remark from the *Tractatus* about the general form of propositions: "this is how things stand" (TLP 4.5) as though it is the voice of his interlocutor, who is expressing a particularly tempting misunderstanding. He comments: "that is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times" (PI 114).

Elsewhere in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein makes references to his old way of thinking. His 'family resemblance' account of language is a response to a challenge from the *Tractatus*: "you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of propositions* and language" (PI 65). It appears that the list of subjects he covers in the *Investigations* is mainly motivated by what he sees as his previous view of language and logic:

> All this, however, can only appear in the right light when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules. (PI 81)

Although it is possible to interpret the *Investigations* without reading it in conjunction with the *Tractatus*, the question of their relationship poses a significant challenge to interpreters of his work. This is not simply the case for those wishing to examine Wittgenstein's criticisms of the *Tractatus*, but more importantly for those who wish to understand the *Investigations* "in the right light".

4 *Desiderata*

Before outlining the desiderata for interpreting these texts, I first provide a point of comparison by mentioning considerations which would ordinarily be important. These are considerations which seem appropriate if the texts are treated as ordinary works of philosophy – in what I have called the traditional conception of philosophy. A traditionally trained philosopher reading the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* would attempt to determine Wittgenstein's theory of language, his

theory of psychological states and his ontological doctrine. He or she would look for the justifications for these theories and probably expect to find a further theory which explains the relationship between thought, language and world. The arguments could be extracted from the texts as paraphrase, without loss of meaning. The propositions would be evaluated for their truth, in order to establish the overall soundness of his conclusions. At the very least the theory would be assessed for consistency and coherence – in other words a traditional philosopher could reasonably expect the theory of language to work when applied to the propositions in the texts. Traditional philosophers might also argue that the theories need to be seen in the context of a philosophical debate, and attempt to show that Wittgenstein's theses refute or support those of other philosophers – particularly Frege and Russell.

In contrast to such traditional considerations, the following *desiderata* are considerations which I believe an adequate interpretation of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* ought to address. These are required if we are to understand Wittgenstein's texts in terms of his own conception of philosophy, rather than from the perspective of the tradition from which he aims to escape. I do not defend each consideration here but raise them at appropriate junctures in the following chapters and return to the list in the final chapter.

A good interpretation of either text will appreciate that Wittgenstein expressed dissatisfaction with the presentation of his ideas. It will take into account that Wittgenstein is simultaneously treating philosophical problems and introducing a new method for dissolving philosophical problems. It may shed light on the issue of why Wittgenstein did not consider it important to discuss the work of other historical figures in philosophy, as would normally be expected.

In addition to these general points, the *desiderata* specific to an interpretation of the *Tractatus* are as follows:

1. It will give credence to Wittgenstein's claim that "the whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (TLP Preface p.3).

2. It will recognise that the *Tractatus* is "not a textbook" (TLP Preface p.3) and consider why the book might "be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts expressed in it" (TLP Preface p.3).
3. It will consider why Wittgenstein felt it necessary to present the remarks in an idiosyncratic style – with the sequence of remarks numbered in order of logical importance.
4. It will present an account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus* – both what he took himself to be doing and what he hoped other philosophers would do. This will include his remarks about the "correct method" for philosophy, the difference between philosophy and science, the view that philosophy is an activity not a body of doctrine and that philosophy results in clarification of propositions not philosophical propositions.
5. It will explain why Wittgenstein believed that in the *Tractatus* he had found "on all essential points the final solution of the problems [of philosophy]" (TLP Preface p.4).
6. It will explain the significance of the general form of a proposition and explain why Wittgenstein felt that his task was to draw a limit to the expression of thought (TLP Preface p.4).
7. It will deal with the problems created by TLP 6.54. It needs to explain how the *Tractatus* consists of elucidations, yet the elucidations are to be thrown away as nonsense, including the remark that tells us that the elucidations are nonsense.
8. It will explain why the *Tractatus* contains the distinctive claim "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said" (TLP 4.1212). It will use the say-show distinction to explain why certain notions, such as logical relations and formal concepts, are shown but cannot be said.
9. It will be able to explain why Wittgenstein considered the *Tractatus* a success when he published the book in 1920, and why he subsequently claimed "I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book" (PI Preface p.viii).

The *desiderata* specific to an interpretation of the *Investigations* are as follows:

1. It will explain why the *Investigations* can "be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of [Wittgenstein's] old way of thinking" (PI Preface p.viii).
2. It will explain why "the very nature of the investigation" compelled Wittgenstein to present his ideas as an "album" of "remarks" or "sketches" (PI Preface p.vii), and why the remarks could not be forced into a single ordered sequence.
3. It will appreciate why Wittgenstein states "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (PI Preface p.viii).
4. It will be sensitive to the polyphony of the text and consider which of the voices, if any, represent Wittgenstein's own views.
5. It will present an account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* – both what he took himself to be doing and what he hoped other philosophers would do. This will include his remarks that there are many methods not *a* method; that philosophy must use descriptions rather than explanations; that complete clarity will mean that philosophical problems completely disappear.
6. It will be able to point out which aspects of the *Investigations* are in agreement with ideas in the *Tractatus* and which aspects are criticisms of ideas in the *Tractatus*.

A study of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* may legitimately prioritise specific issues; in particular I see it as my task to highlight aspects that have not received sufficient attention. The two questions I consider most important are: how should we interpret the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*? And, how should we understand the relation between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*? In my view, if we accept that the say-show distinction is crucial for understanding the *Tractatus* and that the *Tractatus* is crucial for understanding the *Investigations*, then the say-show distinction is crucial for understanding the *Investigations*.

Chapter 3: Available readings of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*

Content

1 Introduction

In this chapter I assess three types of reading: Metaphysical, Therapeutic and Elucidatory. The notion of a reading is more than just a convenient label for grouping commentators who hold similar but not identical views and making comparisons between opposing views. I take a reading to be any study of Wittgenstein's work which attempts to take into account his own views about philosophy and the task of a philosophical work, and therefore attempts to understand his work on its own terms. The three readings I discuss here provide an interpretation of the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*, and attempt to use Wittgenstein's work on its own terms, though in different ways. The considerations which they address include some of those listed in my *desiderata*, such as the problem of self-refutation – when the text says that the text is nonsense in TLP 6.54; and whether to read the *Tractatus* as a work which contains doctrines, or a work which embodies the claim that philosophy is "not a body of doctrine but an activity" (TLP 4.112). The latter is particularly important because it indicates whether or not a commentator treats the say-show distinction as a doctrine. Standard interpretations of Wittgenstein's work, which do not attempt to read the work on its own terms, have no need to call themselves 'readings' – they simply treat the work as they would any other philosophical text.

Rather than discuss all the available interpretations of the *Tractatus* my aim is to assess available interpretations of the say-show distinction, so I put to one side those interpretations of the *Tractatus* which do not address the distinction – those which ignore it or dismiss it out of hand. Furthermore, my aim is to assess *interpretations* of the say-show distinction, rather than descriptions or uses of the distinction. This means that I discuss commentators who give a reasonably

detailed account of how the say-show distinction should be interpreted within the context of reading the *Tractatus*, rather than those who comment on, or appeal to, the distinction but do not reflect on how the distinction is to be properly understood and integrated into the *Tractatus*. So, my assessment is limited to those interpretations of the say-show distinction which are integrated into a 'reading' of the *Tractatus*. I discount interpretations which deal with the *Tractatus* independently of the say-show distinction and vice versa.

2 Available readings of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*

I first discuss Metaphysical Readings (2.1), which are the dominant way of reading the *Tractatus*. The label was introduced by supporters of Cora Diamond, when she identified a common approach in most commentators' readings of the *Tractatus* and targeted this 'family' of readings for criticism. Next I discuss Therapeutic Readings (2.2), which are offered as an alternative to Metaphysical Readings by Diamond and others. Finally I consider an Elucidatory Reading proposed by Marie McGinn (2.3) which aims to offer a 'third way' between the Metaphysical and Therapeutic Readings.

The debate between the Metaphysical and Therapeutic readings is a hot topic amongst Wittgenstein scholars at present, and positions are evolving rapidly in the light of criticism and counter-argument. The labels I use are not ones all commentators still accept. Some now prefer to contrast 'Irresolute readings' with 'Resolute readings' (Goldfarb 1997, 64) or to speak about "Post-modernist readings' (Hacker 2000, 356), 'Austere readings' (Williams 2002) and even 'esoteric and quietist readings' (Williams 2002). But despite increasingly complex refinements and some factional members, the fundamental differences that distinguish the main positions can be explained quite clearly and I have chosen to retain the titles that were used when the contrast between these readings first emerged. The labels only signify that I attribute a certain type of reading to a commentator, not that the commentator takes themselves to be offering that type of reading.

2.1 Metaphysical Readings[1]

Metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus* characteristically claim the following: first Wittgenstein presents (what looks like) an ontological theory, which claims that the world consists of simple objects configured in states of affairs. This is the condition for the possibility of propositions having sense. Next Wittgenstein makes us see that, due to the logical limitations of what can be expressed in propositions with sense, the ontological theory is an example of something that cannot be said. Finally Wittgenstein asks us to 'throw away' the attempt to state theories that cannot be said, and realise that the transcendental or metaphysical features of language and reality are things that can only be shown, but cannot be said, so we must be silent about them. Included in the category of 'things that can only be shown, but cannot be said' are ethics, aesthetics, the logical form of reality and the relationship between language and the world. For present purposes, there are two significant sub-groups with the general category of Metaphysical Readings: some writers claim that Wittgenstein is a metaphysical realist, they argue that "what is shown" are features of reality. Other writers treat Wittgenstein as a transcendental or linguistic idealist, they argue that "what is shown" are the transcendental conditions for the possibility of language or thought.[2] The huge differences between these groups do not matter here since both share the view that the *Tractatus* has a doctrine of ineffable content even though they disagree what that content is.

Metaphysical Readings of the say-show distinction suppose that Wittgenstein believed it to be an important philosophical doctrine. The doctrine states that there are metaphysical features of language and reality which cannot be

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[1] The list of people who give a Metaphysical Reading includes Bertrand Russell, Frank Ramsey, Otto Neurath, Elizabeth Anscombe, Max Black (1964), Sachindranath Ganguly (1968), Norman Malcolm (1986), Peter Geach (1976), David Pears (1987), Brian McGuinness (1966 and 1988), the Hintikkas (1981 and 1986), Gordon Baker (1988) Peter Hacker (2000 and 2002), Hodges (1990), Richard Brockhaus (1991), Hans-Johann Glock (1996) and John Koethe (1996). Not all agree to precisely the same reading of the *Tractatus*, but there is a 'family' of overlapping characteristics which the group as a whole shares and which represent a distinctive interpretative position. See David Stern (1994, 419) for a clear example. Partial versions of this list are given by: McGinn (1999, 491), Conant (2000) and Hacker (2000, 357).

[2] Different versions of this idea are found in David Cooper (1991), Bernard Williams (1981) and Jonathan Lear (1982).

put into words, but language can nonetheless *show* these features.[3] The claim "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said" (TLP 4.1212) is held to commit Wittgenstein to a thesis about ineffable truths. "What *cannot* be said" is the ineffable realm beyond the limits of what can be said. The say-show distinction is between two types of expression: 'saying' applies to ordinary empirical facts, 'showing' applies to ineffable metaphysical truths.[4]

Thus far it appears that a Metaphysical Reading is simply one that proposes that the *Tractatus* contains a doctrine about ineffable content. However, this is not the whole story. Metaphysical Readings also attribute a double aspect to the say-show distinction – it is a doctrine about ineffability (about what can only be shown, not said) and *the doctrine itself is ineffable* (it can only be shown, not said). Metaphysical Readings are forced into this paradoxical position due to two problems. The first problem is that the *Tractatus* explicitly rejects philosophical theorising about metaphysics.[5] To avoid this difficulty, Metaphysical Readings use TLP 6.54 to argue that the apparent metaphysical views are a 'ladder' to be thrown away. Throwing away the explicit metaphysical theory is an acknowledgement that we cannot express metaphysical insights in words – they are ineffable and *show* themselves.[6] The role of the say-show distinction is thus to turn the ordinary metaphysical doctrines into ineffable metaphysical doctrines and thereby rescue the *Tractatus* from incoherence.[7] The solution to the first problem rests on the say-show distinction, but gives rise to the second problem: if the say-show distinction is correct, then one of the things that cannot be said is the say-

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[3] "What lies beyond the limits of language cannot be asserted in language, but can only be shown" (Pears 1971, 51). "The essential structure of reality [...] is something which can only be shown" (Pears 1971, 84). "It is thus the world-language links, and these links only, that cannot be said but can be shown according to Wittgenstein" (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986, 6). "The 'logical space' of the *Tractatus* is what 'showing' in the *Tractatus* showed" (Irving Block 1980, 236).

[4] "Showing and saying are language's two forms of expression. Silence in the domain of what can only be shown speaks profusely." (Judith Genova 1995, 103). There is a contrast between "the nonfactual realm of what is shown or manifested and the realm of the factual" (Koethe 1996, 57). "Showing, in my view, thus *is* a kind of second-rate saying" (Koethe 1996, 38).

[5] TLP 6.53.

[6] "One is left holding on to some ineffable truths about reality after one has thrown away the ladder" (Hacker 2000, 357). "Philosophy will express clearly what can be said and thereby show the limit of thought. This is the same as showing what cannot be said or thought" (Ganguly 1968, 110).

[7] The say-show distinction is judged to be "a way for Wittgenstein to eat his cake and have it too" (Edwards 1985, 23).

show distinction itself – and most of the *Tractatus*. In response to this, Metaphysical Readings say that, although Wittgenstein cannot put 'what shows itself' into words, the *Tractatus* is nonetheless able to convey it – specifically it shows it rather than says it. In other words the doctrine of saying and showing is not just about ineffable content, it is itself ineffable. This view of the say-show distinction is characteristic of Metaphysical Readings.

A significant merit of Metaphysical Readings is that they place great emphasis on the central role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*.[8] However, there are several problems with their conception of the distinction. First I summarise Diamond's attack on Metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*; then I criticise more specifically the way that Metaphysical Readings interpret the say-show distinction and explain why I reject this kind of interpretation.

Although Metaphysical Readings appeal to the framing remarks, Diamond claims that they do not take TLP 6.54 seriously enough – instead they 'chicken out'. To 'chicken out' is to pretend to 'throw away the ladder', but actually retain the idea that you are left holding on to ineffable metaphysical truths, or an ineffable vision of reality.[9] Diamond describes 'chickening out' thus:

> It looks as though there is this whatever-it-is, the logical form of reality, some essential feature of reality, which reality has all right, but which we cannot say or think that it has. What exactly is supposed to be left of that, after we have thrown away the ladder? Are we going to keep the idea that there is something or other in reality that we gesture at, however badly, when we speak of 'the logical form of reality', so that it, what we were gesturing at, is there, but cannot be expressed in words? (Diamond 1995, 181)

Metaphysical Readings throw away some of the nonsensical remarks of the *Tractatus* but keep hold of a metaphysics that can only be shown but not said and

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[8] McGinn claims that they also have the following strengths: they make the *Tractatus* seem profound because "there is something behind his remarks" (McGinn 1999, 496); they diagnose why what lies behind Wittgenstein's remarks cannot be said (McGinn 1999, 496); and they give the positive idea that we are left able to 'see the world aright' (McGinn 1999, 492). Hacker claims that the strength of his own metaphysical reading is that it is true to Wittgenstein's thought – it is the real reading, not just an ironic reading (Hacker 2000).

[9] Conant describes an example. Although Brian McGuinness accepts that certain aspects of the *Tractatus* are self-refuting, such as the supposed ontological theory in the opening sections; nonetheless he hangs on to the idea that the *Tractatus* can show ineffable truths about language or

a doctrine of saying and showing that can only be shown but not said. Against this, Diamond argues:

> 'What cannot be said', is not something that is unsayably so. The *Tractatus*, that is, is not an attack on metaphysics as merely unsayable. What cannot be thought, cannot be thought and not cheating on that means not treating 'cannot be thought' as meaning *unsayably* so. (Diamond 1995, 32)

Defenders of Metaphysical Readings respond by insisting that, even if the criticism is correct, this interpretation nonetheless represents Wittgenstein's view. In other words, if commentators 'chicken out', it is only because Wittgenstein himself 'chickened out'. Likewise, if they attribute an incoherent doctrine of saying and showing to Wittgenstein, they are right to do so because Wittgenstein himself put forward an incoherent doctrine, albeit unwittingly. To back this up they argue that the incoherence of the say-show distinction is something that Wittgenstein himself later recognised and which caused him to reject the *Tractatus*.[10]

I think that this defence is less convincing than it first appears – not least because it does not defend a useful interpretation of the distinction but simply justifies interpreting the distinction as a failure. I consider it significant that so many defenders of Metaphysical Readings are happy to accept that the say-show distinction is unsuccessful; it is a curious feature of this type of reading that it is more often used to attack the say-show distinction than to defend it. I think that this is because Metaphysical Readings of saying and showing contain a presupposition which makes the distinction deeply flawed. The presupposition is that the *Tractatus* should be read as though it is a traditional work of philosophical doctrine. This assumption can be traced to the original reception of the *Tractatus*, particularly Russell's influential view that the *Tractatus* expresses a doctrine of ineffable metaphysics. He describes "Wittgenstein's fundamental thesis" as the view that "it is impossible to say anything about the world as a whole" (TLP

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ethics: "for McGuinness, even after the edifice of explicit doctrine crumbles, a hidden ghost of ineffable doctrine remains hovering over the debris" (Conant 1991a, 339).

[10] The latter line of defence is used by Hacker: "the exegetical task is to make sense of his thinking what he thought, not to make sense of what he thought, since we have it on his own (later) authority that what he thought was confused" (Hacker 2000, 370).

Introduction p.xvii). His objection: "after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" (TLP Introduction p.xxi) is an often repeated complaint in the literature and is still treated as a knock-down objection.[11]

My point is that the assumption that the *Tractatus* should be read as a traditional work of philosophical doctrine drives us onto the horns of a dilemma: the say-show distinction must either be a paradoxical, ineffable doctrine, or an incoherent doctrine. Both are unpalatable alternatives. If commentators wish to defend the distinction against incoherence by insisting that it is ineffable; they will at least be charged with attempting to say what Wittgenstein himself said (or even showed) could not be said;[12] or worse still, their position will be defeated by Diamond's objection. The other alternative is to accept that the distinction is an incoherent, self-refuting doctrine – one which should be rejected because it does attempt to say what it says cannot be said.[13] It should be noted that even though these views are opposing theses, they have in common the assumption that the say-show distinction is a philosophical doctrine, whether coherent or incoherent, which is communicated in some manner by the *Tractatus* and still retained at the end – after the 'ladder' has been thrown away.

My reason for rejecting all the Metaphysical Readings is that they interpret the *Tractatus* from a standpoint which still retains a traditional conception of philosophy. They ignore or dismiss the remarks in the *Tractatus* that claim that genuine philosophy is activity not doctrine, and they consequently assume that the text conveys doctrines. Although Metaphysical Readings give a pivotal role to the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* – usually treating it as the most important doctrine in the *Tractatus* – they do so at the unacceptable price of making the doctrine a failure. It will not be possible to look for a positive role for the say-

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[11] Hacker's most recent defence of his Metaphysical Reading puts great emphasis on Ramsey's famous criticism: "what we can't say, we can't say and we can't whistle it either" (Hacker 2000, 355). Hacker concludes that Wittgenstein "was indeed, as Ramsey claimed, trying to whistle it" (Hacker 2000, 382).

[12] Some commentators claim that their commentary shows but does not say what Wittgenstein's say-show distinction shows but does not say. E.g. Roy Lemoine (1975) and James Edwards (1985). I criticise this approach in Chapter 4.

show distinction in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* unless we first establish that it is successful in the *Tractatus*. We need to look beyond the two alternatives of ineffability or incoherence offered by Metaphysical Readings.

2.2 Therapeutic Readings [14]

Therapeutic Readings of the *Tractatus* typically run as follows: Wittgenstein expects the reader to go through the stages described by the Metaphysical Readings, first a straightforward ontological theory and theory of language; second the realisation that according to the theory of language the metaphysical claims cannot be said; third the understanding that metaphysical doctrines necessarily have ineffable content, so the say-show distinction is itself ineffable. Having reached the third stage, however, there is still one more stage to undergo – the reader must realise that the idea of metaphysical 'truths' that can be shown but not said is nonsensical, and must 'throw away' the temptation to accept this idea. The reader then understands that there are no 'unsayable' features of reality expressed either by 'showing' or a special type of nonsense, but only sentences which say something and nonsensical combinations of words which do not.[15]

Therapeutic Readings are not primarily concerned with the say-show distinction, but with the issue of sense and nonsense. According to Therapeutic Readings, the paradox or incoherence of the supposed doctrine of saying and showing is not an indication that Wittgenstein made a mistake in the *Tractatus* that he realised only later. The say-show distinction is simply one of many examples of philosophical nonsense of which Wittgenstein aims to cure us – just

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[13] "His theories were good metaphysical theories. Admittedly they made the general metaphysical mistake of trying to say what can only be shown. But he claimed that what they tried to say is something valid" (Pears 1971, 53).

[14] A 'Therapeutic Reading' or 'Therapeutic Strategy' is a label for the family of ideas which appear in Diamond's work and the work of her supporters. According to Marie McGinn, the principal advocates of a therapeutic strategy along with Diamond are James Conant, Thomas Ricketts and Warren Goldfarb (McGinn 1999, 492). According to Ricketts, sympathisers also include Peter Hylton, Burton Dreben and Juliet Floyd (Ricketts 1996, 99). The recently published *The New Wittgenstein* (2000) is a collection of articles by commentators who have added their support to this position.

[15] According to Conant, at the end of the *Tractatus*, when we have thrown away the ladder, we are left with absolutely nothing, not a nothing that points at something that cannot be said (Conant 1991, 337). Conant claims that the silence invoked by TLP 7 "is one in which nothing has been said and there is nothing to say (of the sort we imagined there to be" (Conant 1992, 216).

one rung of the ladder which the *Tractatus* asks us to throw away.[16] Therapeutic Readings give a purely deflationary account of the say-show distinction: the notion of a distinction between saying and showing is entirely nonsensical, it makes no more sense than a distinction between piggly and wiggly. The only significant difference is that a piggly/wiggly distinction is obvious nonsense, whereas a say-show distinction appears to have sense and thus generates philosophical confusion.[17]

Therapeutic Readings take Wittgenstein's instructions very seriously. Diamond stresses the significance of "the sentences which frame the book, in the Preface and the final remarks" (Diamond 1995, 18), particularly TLP 6.54 which expresses the idea that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical, they are a ladder which must be thrown away at the end of the book. According to Diamond, if we take the frame seriously we realise that the important thing is not to 'chicken out'.[18] A non-chickening out interpretation of the say-show distinction is thus entirely deflationary:

> We are so convinced that we understand what we are trying to say that we see only the two possibilities: *it* is sayable, *it* is not sayable. But Wittgenstein's aim is to allow us to see that there is no *it*. (Diamond 1995, 198)

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[16] According to Ricketts, the say-show distinction is introduced as a cure for the incoherence of the *Tractatus*, but is then itself revealed to be irredeemably incoherent. "There is no resolution of the incoherence of Wittgenstein's rhetoric of saying and showing" (Ricketts 1996, 94).

[17] Diamond argues that there are not different logical categories of nonsense – "nonsense sentences are as it were internally all the same" (Diamond 2000, 159). However there is a significant psychological difference between seeing a nonsensical sentence as nonsense and seeing the sentence as though it has sense. We can "distinguish nonsense-sentences by the external circumstances of their utterance" (Diamond 2000, 161). Although there is no logical difference between the say-show distinction and the piggly/wiggly distinction – they are both nonsense; there is a psychological difference – one is treated as though it has sense and the other is not.

[18] "What counts as not chickening out is then this, roughly: to throw the ladder away is, among other things, to throw away in the end the attempt to take seriously the language of 'features of reality'. To read Wittgenstein himself as not chickening out is to say that it is not, not really, his view that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves" (Diamond 1995, 181). Goldfarb dislikes the term "chickening out" so introduces the terms 'Resolute' and 'Irresolute' to describe readings which do or do not entirely throw away the ladder (Goldfarb 1997a, 64). Hence, although Goldfarb and Koethe refer to Diamond's position as a Resolute Reading (ibid. and Koethe 1996, 37), this is not equivalent to the term "Therapeutic Reading". A Therapeutic Reading is one which takes the aim of the *Tractatus* to be therapeutic and not all Resolute Readings do this.

The distinction between saying and showing is simply one more nonsensical aspect of the *Tractatus* that has to be thrown away. She says: "the notion of something true of reality but not sayably true is to be used only with the awareness that it itself belongs to what has to be thrown away" (Diamond 1995, 182).

The strength of Therapeutic Readings is that they can accept *everything* the Metaphysical Readings have to offer, including the conception of the say-show distinction as an ineffable doctrine about the ineffability of metaphysics, but then go on to point out that the final move has yet to be made before the reading counts as an understanding of the *Tractatus*. The final move is that everything Metaphysical Readings have to offer must be thrown away. In this way the reader is given therapy to cure their philosophical confusion. Throwing away the ladder is "the final step in the philosophical journey" (Diamond 1995, 3).

I turn now to criticisms of Therapeutic Readings.[19] Critics such as Peter Hacker (2002), Lynette Reid (1998), John Koethe (1996), Meredith Williams (2002) and Peter Sullivan (2002) primarily attack the way that Therapeutic Readings understand the *Tractatus* rather than its conception of the say-show distinction. Hacker's criticism, which is actually a defence of his Metaphysical Reading, is to argue that this type of reading is not sufficiently faithful to the text and to Wittgenstein's correspondence.[20] Reid and Koethe focus on the objection that Therapeutic Readings generate an unacceptable paradox – the text is utter nonsense and yet somehow *says* that it is utter nonsense.[21] Defenders of Therapeutic Readings have responses to these objections and the debate remains a live issue. My specific concern is to discuss how Therapeutic Readings interpret the say-show distinction, so I shall first consider the most relevant criticisms raised by Marie McGinn, and then introduce further objections of my own.

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[19] Hacker is a prominent critic, who uses the term 'post-modernist interpretation' instead of the Therapeutic Reading label (2000, 360). Koethe also criticises Diamond's position but calls it the "Resolute Reading", following Goldfarb (Koethe 1996, 37).

[20] Hacker sets up what he calls a "pincer movement" of internal and external evidence to object to Therapeutic Readings (Hacker 2000, 360ff.).

[21] See Reid (1998). Hacker makes a similar point when he argues that Therapeutic Readings are "methodologically inconsistent" (Hacker 2000, 360). See also McGinn (1999, 496). Diamond has argued that the remarks of the *Tractatus* should be taken as 'transitional nonsense' (Diamond

McGinn is sympathetic to Therapeutic Readings, over Metaphysical Readings, but argues that the former are inadequate with respect to their treatment of saying and showing. Although Therapeutic Readings take the Preface and TLP 6.54 far more seriously than Metaphysical Readings, according to McGinn they neglect the say-show distinction (McGinn 1999, 496). This criticism is well founded. Therapeutic Readings claim that Wittgenstein's primary aim in the *Tractatus* is to cure us of philosophical illness by teaching us to recognise and reject nonsense. Diamond and others do not totally disregard the say-show distinction, indeed Diamond notes that the say-show distinction is "central" to the *Tractatus* (Diamond 1988, 5). But their deflationary account accords the distinction insufficient importance insofar as they treat it as nothing more than one among many nonsensical pseudo-doctrines which are to be thrown away. I agree with McGinn that it is important to give the distinction a more significant role, rather than treat it as nothing more than part of the nonsense that is to be rejected.

McGinn's main objection is that there is an assumption which is shared by both Metaphysical Readings and Therapeutic Readings; and this assumption is a false dilemma:

> The metaphysical and therapeutic approaches to *TLP* offer us the unappealing alternative between reading Wittgenstein's remarks as nonsense that conveys ineffable truths about the world, and as nonsense that conveys nothing whatsoever. (McGinn 1999, 498)

For my purposes, I restate McGinn's criticism specifically in terms of the say-show distinction as follows: the two dominant interpretations of the say-show distinction present us with a false dichotomy: either the say-show distinction entails that there are 'truths' or 'thoughts' that can be shown but not said, in which case the distinction is an important philosophical doctrine; or the say-show distinction is utter nonsense that must be dispensed with without remainder. In the former case we end up with an incoherent notion of something that can be shown but not said. In the latter case we end up with saying and showing as nothing more than a distinction between piggly and wiggly. McGinn's point is that although

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2000), but even Goldfarb, who endorses her view, admits that this issue poses a "deep difficulty" for any Therapeutic reading (Goldfarb 1997, 72).

Therapeutic Readings are right to reject the former conception of the say-show distinction, they are wrong to imagine that the latter conception is the correct or sole alternative. I consider McGinn's own response to this dilemma in the next section (2.3).[22]

McGinn provides two strong objections: Therapeutic Readings fail to give the say-show distinction a central role; and the Metaphysical and Therapeutic Readings occupy opposing horns of a dilemma. Now another criticism can be made, which links both of these objections and goes a step further.

The problem, as I see it, is that both Metaphysical and Therapeutic Readings start with the same assumption: that the *Tractatus* is to be read as a work of philosophical doctrine. This assumption is the root of the dilemma that McGinn has identified. The difference is that Metaphysical Readings claim that we should eventually realise that the *Tractatus* conveys an ineffable doctrine, whereas Therapeutic Readings claim that we should eventually realise that it conveys a pseudo-doctrine. My point is that both readings start from a standpoint that remains wedded to some commitments from traditional philosophy. Both ultimately argue that Wittgenstein's view of philosophy is unusual, even radical, but they do not read the *Tractatus* from this standpoint to begin with. Although I established that Metaphysical Readings are influenced by the traditional standpoint, it does not immediately seem right to say that Therapeutic Readings make the same mistake. It appears obvious that Therapeutic Readings support the idea that "philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity" (TLP 4.112). Specifically they see the activity of philosophy as the therapeutic removal of nonsense – including pseudo-doctrines. Using the idiom of 'therapy', Therapeutic Readings characterise reading the *Tractatus* as a process, journey, or series of

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[22] Moore is another commentator who rejects both Therapeutic and Metaphysical Readings. He says the *Tractatus* is not just a "tissue of gibberish" as Therapeutic Readings suggest (Moore 1997, 152). Instead: "Wittgenstein does believe in things that are beyond representation. In his own terminology, there are things that, though they cannot be said, *can* be *shown*" (Moore 1997, 152). This sounds as though Moore is defending a Metaphysical Reading of the say-show distinction, but he is not. Although Moore believes, like McGinn that Therapeutic Readings fail to give a sufficiently substantial role to the say-show distinction, he does not accept Metaphysical Readings because he accepts Diamond's criticism of that approach: "I want to distance myself from the absurdity that the things we are shown are things that can be interpreted as having an 'inexpressible' content" (Moore 1997, 200). Although Moore develops a version of the say-show

changes undergone by the reader. However, this on its own is not sufficient to avoid my objection. The point is that, although Therapeutic Readings end up with a conception of Wittgenstein's philosophy as an activity, they nonetheless start by reading the text as a traditional doctrine. In other words, the final message of the *Tractatus* is that philosophy is an activity (therapy), but to convey this message it has to be read first as a doctrine which is then 'thrown away'. So, my objection is that, ironically, the Therapeutic Readings are guilty of a type of 'chickening out' – they take seriously the idea that Wittgenstein sees philosophy as activity rather than as doctrine, but do not take seriously enough the idea that Wittgenstein's text must be read right from the start as activity not as doctrine.

This starting point explains why Therapeutic Readings fail to give a sufficiently important role to the say-show distinction. Therapeutic Readings characterise the different elements of the *Tractatus* that are thrown away as individual 'rungs' of a ladder,[23] hence the say-show distinction is just one rung on the ladder.[24] The say-show distinction has to be first read as a doctrine, then as a pseudo-doctrine, then thrown away. Even if the say-show distinction is the most important pseudo-doctrine in the *Tractatus*, it is still secondary to the final therapeutic gesture of throwing away the ladder. In short: the say-show distinction is not crucial to the therapeutic activity, instead we get therapy by throwing the say-show distinction away.

To sum up: the merit of Therapeutic Readings is that they take the Preface and concluding remarks of the *Tractatus* more seriously than Metaphysical Readings. However, they fail to privilege the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. To understand the say-show distinction it is important to treat it as more than just "part of the nonsense".[25]

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distinction which departs from Wittgenstein's texts (and so is not discussed here) his view serves to emphasise the need for an alternative to the two main readings of the say-show distinction.

[23] E.g. Diamond says that when we see as nonsensical Wittgenstein's remark "about philosophy's being able to talk about the self in a non-psychological way" then we "throw away the ladder of which it is a rung" (Diamond 1995, 3).

[24] Conant says: "the doctrine of ineffable content represents one of the rungs of the ladder the reader of the *Tractatus* must ascend and surmount – and [...] in the end, throw away" (Conant 1991a, 340).

[25] According to Hacker, for a Therapeutic Reading, "the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown but not said is itself part of the nonsense that is to be discarded" (Hacker 2000, 358).

2.3 An Elucidatory Reading

According to McGinn, neither a Metaphysical Reading nor a Therapeutic Reading "provides a fully satisfactory resting place" (McGinn 1999, 496). Her own Elucidatory Reading aims for synthesis of the two interpretations previously considered – she hopes to incorporate the strengths of both and the weaknesses of neither (McGinn 1999, 496-7).

McGinn's Elucidatory Reading is based on Wittgenstein's statement that "a philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations" (TLP 4.112), and that in the *Tractatus* his "propositions serve as elucidations" (TLP 6.54). Elucidations are differentiated from concepts such as explanation and theory (McGinn 1999, 498); they do not present discoveries or substantial claims (McGinn 1999, 505), indeed the activity of elucidation "dispels our sense of a need for philosophical explanation" (McGinn 1999, 505). Elucidation is a "critical activity" (McGinn 1999, 502), specifically an "activity of reflecting on the phenomena of language" (McGinn 1999, 504). Elucidations work to "get the reader to look at things in a new way" (McGinn 1999, 503), they do not or uncover something hidden but "draw our attention to something that lies before our eyes" (McGinn 1999, 501); they do not inform us of facts but bring us "to see a certain order in what lies on the surface" (McGinn 1999, 502). Once they have served their purpose the elucidations become redundant:

> It is in just this sense that Wittgenstein's remarks are to be understood as elucidatory: their utility and significance are exhausted by their power to get the reader to see something familiar and everyday in a new light. Once the change in the reader's perception of pictures has been brought about, the remarks drop away, for they have no factual or descriptive content to sustain them. (McGinn 1999, 502)

Elucidations "drop away" because they are used to clarify "something that lies open to view" (PI 126, cited in McGinn 1999, 499), and this clarification is always for a particular purpose. Once the purpose has been achieved there is no further need for the elucidations.[26] In the case of the *Tractatus*, the elucidations

[26] There is a significant difference here between McGinn's Elucidatory Reading and Therapeutic Readings. Both claim that the activity of the *Tractatus* involves the reader. According to

serve to clarify the phenomena of language, and the purpose is to dispel philosophical puzzlement. Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus* is to bring us to "recognise *how* language takes care of itself" (*Notebooks* p.43, cited in McGinn 1999, 499) – this recognition will dispel "philosophical problems concerning the justification of logic and the relation between language and world" (McGinn 1999, 512).[27]

McGinn's Elucidatory Reading claims that the opening section of the *Tractatus*, which talks about the world of facts, should not be read as an ontological doctrine that explains or justifies language (McGinn 1999, 499); it should be seen as a "mythological description" (McGinn 1999, 500) – or "material picture of our language" (McGinn 1999, 499). Wittgenstein's opening picture sets up a distinction between content, structure and form, and encourages us to see a contrast between what is accidental and what is essential (McGinn 1999, 500). These distinctions are not metaphysical claims about reality, they just provide a model that will be held up to language for comparison.[28] McGinn describes how in the next part of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein uses the distinctions he has introduced to elucidate pictures – first drawing our attention to their content and structure (McGinn 1999, 500-501); then bringing us to see that the pictorial form of a picture, which is essential, "cannot be the subject of depiction" (McGinn 1999, 501). The same distinctions are then used to elucidate propositions, through an analogy between pictures and propositions (McGinn 1999, 503-505); then the analogy between pictorial form and logic is used to elucidate logic (McGinn 1999, 507-509); then the distinction between what is accidental and what is essential is used to elucidate our conception of scientific laws (McGinn 1999, 509-511). By the end of the *Tractatus* the elucidations can be totally thrown away; the reader is left with a transformed, clarified vision of ordinary language and philosophical problems will have been dispelled.[29]

Therapeutic Readings the reader comes to see that the remarks are nonsense. According to McGinn's Elucidatory Reading the reader comes to see a certain order in their language.

[27] McGinn claims that it also dispels puzzlement concerning "the relation between thought and language" (McGinn 1999, 507) but does not discuss this.

[28] McGinn acknowledges that reading the *Tractatus* this way invites a comparison with the method of language-games in the *Investigations* (McGinn 1999, 499).

[29] See (McGinn 1999, 512-513).

So how does an Elucidatory Reading interpret the say-show distinction? The say-show distinction is central to the 'material picture' that Wittgenstein uses to elucidate language. It should be emphasised that this is not to claim that the say-show distinction is itself a feature of language – the say-show distinction is an elucidation that will 'drop away' when it has changed the way we see language. The distinction involves "the relation between what is essential (form) and what is accidental (the arrangement of objects in states of affairs)" (McGinn 1999, 493 fn.9). Once this is recognised it is clear that the Elucidatory Reading of the *Tractatus* has the say-show distinction at its centre. Take, for example, the elucidatory comparison between pictures and propositions: this makes us see that "the distinction between what is possible and what is essential in language mirrors the distinction between what can be pictured and pictorial form" (McGinn 1999, 504). When we recognise this we see that "whatever is essential to a proposition's representing is not something that can be represented in a proposition" (McGinn 1999, 504-505), in other words "logic belongs to the limit of what can be said in language, and not to what is expressible within it" (McGinn 1999, 505). This is not a fact or discovery – it is seeing a certain order in the phenomena of language for a particular purpose:

> In the case of logic a whole pattern of order is made apparent to us, in which the question of the justification or foundation for logic evaporates. It is not that he puts forward a theory of logic, but that we are able both to recognise the order he invites us to see in the phenomena, and to see that it is an order which brings out the unique status of logic and shows that the whole idea of justifying it is unintelligible. (McGinn 1999, 507-508)

This is only one example, but for an Elucidatory Reading the say-show distinction is important throughout the *Tractatus*. It is used to elucidate language in such a way that it brings about a certain order in the phenomena of language, and seeing this order means that "philosophical puzzlements concerning the status of logic, the relation between language and the world or the relation between thought (the mind) and language, 'completely disappear'" (McGinn 1999, 504).

We can now see how an Elucidatory Reading offers an alternative to the false dilemma between Metaphysical Readings and Therapeutic Readings. It claims that the *Tractatus* does not present either a real or a nonsensical thesis

about the ineffability of metaphysics and the say-show distinction is neither an incoherent doctrine, nor utter nonsense. An Elucidatory Reading agrees with Metaphysical Readings that the say-show distinction is the primary focus of the *Tractatus* (McGinn 1999, 496) – it can change the way we see language and, by clarifying our vision, dispel philosophical problems. An Elucidatory Reading also agrees with Therapeutic Readings that the say-show distinction is entirely thrown away (McGinn 1999, 512) but has a different conception of what it is to throw away the ladder. Therapeutic Readings claim that we throw away the pseudo-doctrines of the *Tractatus* once we have realised that they are nonsense – throwing away the remarks is the final act of our therapy. The Elucidatory Reading claims that the elucidations of the *Tractatus* are thrown away not because we realise that they are nonsense, but because when properly treated as elucidations they become redundant.

Whether or not we agree with other details of McGinn's account, an Elucidatory Reading does offer a significant new way of interpreting the say-show distinction. The main point is that we do not have to read the distinction as though it is either a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine about language. It can instead be seen as a tool which has a philosophical purpose. The say-show distinction does not make any claims about language, it is a device used to encourage the reader to look at language in new ways. But there is a notable weakness with McGinn's Elucidatory Reading. By claiming that the *Tractatus* consists of elucidations and the say-show distinction is an elucidation, McGinn misses an opportunity to give the distinction an even more central role in the *Tractatus*. McGinn implies that the say-show distinction is one type of elucidation (albeit the most important elucidation in the *Tractatus*). I think it is possible to go further – to argue that the process of elucidating is wholly concerned with what shows itself, therefore all the elucidations of the *Tractatus* are concerned with showing rather than saying.

If we accept that an Elucidatory Reading could treat elucidation as 'showing' then this strengthens the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. However there remains another problem to address. There is ambiguity in McGinn's account of 'elucidation': she does not make it clear when elucidation is a noun (used to describe a type of proposition) and when a verb (used to

describe a type of activity). Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Tractatus* are called elucidations and their function is elucidation; the say-show distinction is an elucidation and its purpose is elucidation. The difference between these is not insignificant – to call something an elucidation in the former sense does not entail that an act of elucidation has taken place.[30] McGinn's claim that there are two strands in the *Tractatus* – elucidations and non-elucidations – misrepresents Wittgenstein's project because he intended all of the remarks in the *Tractatus* to be elucidations. McGinn actually means that there are two strands in the *Tractatus* – elucidations that work and elucidations that do not work – but she does not do enough to explain why Wittgenstein believed all his remarks to be elucidatory. I believe that this is because she does not wholly appreciate the role of the say-show distinction in his conception of philosophy.

3 Summary and Comment

In sections 2.1 and 2.2, I discussed opposed readings of the *Tractatus*. According to Metaphysical Readings the say-show distinction is a doctrine about ineffability and it is an ineffable doctrine. Most Metaphysical Readings say that this means the say-show distinction is incoherent. Others claim it is a paradox which is not incoherent, but fail to explain how this is so without lapsing into incoherence. According to Therapeutic Readings the say-show distinction is an utterly nonsensical pseudo-doctrine about ineffability, and the idea that it is a profound, paradoxical, ineffable doctrine is the final temptation that must also be thrown away. These two interpretations present a false dilemma: either the say-show distinction is the paradoxical doctrine that there are 'truths' or a 'realm' that can be shown but not said; or the say-show distinction is utter nonsense. One cause of this false dilemma is the fact that both readings share a traditional assumption of

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[30] This helps to explain why McGinn's account contains a distinction between two strands in the *Tractatus*: those remarks which are successful elucidations and those which are not. She claims that the non-elucidatory remarks are those which express theoretical presuppositions and philosophical misconceptions which Wittgenstein later rejected. These include: his "commitment to the determinacy of sense, to a logically perspicuous symbolism, to simple symbols, to the logical independence of elementary propositions, or to the idea that all logical truths are tautologies" (McGinn 1999, 498).

how to read the *Tractatus* – namely that it should be read as though it contains philosophical doctrines.

In section 2.3, I considered an alternative to this false dilemma. McGinn's Elucidatory Reading interprets the say-show distinction as an elucidation which changes the reader's vision of language and dispels philosophical problems, then, once it has served its purpose, it drops away. McGinn's Elucidatory Reading treats the say-show distinction as important to Wittgenstein's treatment of a central problem in philosophy of language, but does not see the importance of the distinction to Wittgenstein's overall conception of philosophy. Hence she does not wholly appreciate the revolution needed if we are to properly understand the *Tractatus* from the standpoint of Wittgenstein's new conception of philosophy.

In conclusion, none of the available interpretations of the say-show distinction are wholly adequate, but lessons can be learned. It is best to see the say-show distinction as a tool for a philosophical purpose – an elucidatory device. In doing this I think that we can treat the say-show distinction as central to Wittgenstein's philosophical method, rather than a feature of language or reality. Furthermore, rather than simply claim that the say-show distinction is one among many elucidations in the *Tractatus*, I shall argue that all elucidation is concerned with what shows itself but cannot be said, and thus that the method of elucidation helps us to solve philosophical problems by seeing language in new ways.

Chapter 4:Available readings of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*

Content

1 Introduction

It is my view that if we are to understand the *Investigations* in the right light – which involves reading it in conjunction with the *Tractatus* – then we cannot avoid considering the significance of the say-show distinction for the *Investigations*. A great many commentators say nothing about the say-show distinction when reading the *Investigations*. It is too strong to claim that these writers believe there is discontinuity between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* with respect to the distinction, or that they believe Wittgenstein rejects the distinction in the *Investigations*, because for them these questions simply do not arise. In most cases this is because they do not read the *Investigations* in conjunction with the *Tractatus*. If they have a view at all, it is probably that the distinction has no relevance or connection with the *Investigations*. I believe that this view offers only a limited interpretation of the *Investigations* and cannot explore the more fruitful avenues which become possible when the say-show distinction is taken into account. This is not to pre-judge whether the say-show distinction is either retained or rejected in the *Investigations*. My point is that, whether it is retained or rejected, to say that the *Investigations* has a stance of some sort towards the distinction is already to add something worthwhile to our understanding of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

My aim in this chapter is to consider commentators' views of the significance of the say-show distinction for understanding the *Investigations*. I say that a commentator believes that the say-show distinction is 'retained' if they claim that it is in some sense positively defended, retained or affirmed – in other words treated as a successful or legitimate distinction, doctrine or device. I say that a commentator believes that the distinction is 'rejected' if they claim that it is

in some sense attacked, rejected or denied – treated negatively as an unsuccessful or illegitimate distinction, doctrine or device. These general terms may help to group commentators for the purposes of discussion, as a way of dealing with the problem that writers express their views in very different terms and with different emphasis. However, the difference between commentators is sometimes more than a matter of emphasis. One task of this chapter is to make these differences apparent, but a major difference can be outlined in advance. Any reading of Wittgenstein's texts which treats them as works of philosophical doctrine, is to be contrasted with any reading which treats the texts as a philosophical activity. A commentator who takes the former approach to the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* is likely to ask questions such as "is the distinction asserted or denied in the *Investigations*?", or "is the distinction confirmed or refuted?" In other words, the issue that matters is whether the *doctrine* of saying and showing is retained or rejected. In contrast, a commentator who does not treat the distinction as a doctrine in the *Tractatus* will ask questions like "is the distinction used or not used in the *Investigations*?", or "does the distinction have a function or is it redundant?". To say that two commentators both agree that the *Investigations* retains the say-show distinction may be misleading, if one believes that it is doctrine and the other does not. With this caveat in mind I propose that a good way to consider commentators' views of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* is to look at their account of the distinction in the *Tractatus*, then consider what they say, or would say, about the distinction in the *Investigations*. We may then ask which of the readings of the *Tractatus* will best enable us to use the say-show distinction to understand the *Investigations*.

In the last chapter I discussed available readings of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. Here I ask whether commentators who subscribe to each of these readings have a view about the distinction in the *Investigations*. Most commentators who discuss the distinction in the *Tractatus* give Metaphysical Readings. Some of these express no view about its significance for the *Investigations*,[1] but others argue either that Wittgenstein rejects or retains the

[1] E.g. Hanfling (1989) who says a lot about the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*, but does not mention it when discussing the *Investigations*. In what follows I only discuss commentators who express a view about the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.

distinction in the *Investigations*. A growing number of commentators give Therapeutic Readings of the distinction in the *Tractatus,* and McGinn has explored the potential for an Elucidatory Reading. Neither of these two readings has yet explored the significance of the distinction for the *Investigations*. In both cases I speculate as to what the likely outcome would be if they did. I argue that: i) Metaphysical Readings are best suited to defend the view that Wittgenstein rejects the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*. ii) Therapeutic Readings would only be able to defend the view that the distinction is either not at all significant or rejected in the *Investigations*. iii) McGinn's Elucidatory Reading would only be able to defend the view that the distinction is retained in the *Investigations*.

2 Available readings of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*

2.1 Metaphysical Readings

According to proponents of Metaphysical Readings, Wittgenstein treats the say-show distinction as a serious doctrine in the *Tractatus*, albeit a special type of 'ineffable' doctrine. Some commentators have argued that he also does so in the *Investigations*.[2] Others have argued that he rejects the doctrine in the *Investigations*.[3] In this section I outline their general arguments schematically, then discuss some specific examples in more detail.

To argue that the say-show distinction is rejected in the *Investigations*, commentators can appeal to two problems with the distinction. First, the doctrine of saying and showing cannot be a feature of Wittgenstein's later work because it is incoherent in the *Tractatus*. Not only is a doctrine of the ineffability of metaphysics incoherent, but the distinction itself is self-referentially incoherent. In short, when applied to itself the say-show distinction is a doctrine that can be

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[2] The view that the *Investigations* retains the say-show distinction is held by, amongst others, James Edwards (Edwards 1985, 105 and 1990, 135); the Hintikkas (Jaakko and Merrill Hintikka 1981, 80 and 1986, 216); Rudolph Haller (Haller 1988, 23-4); David Stern (Stern 1995, 190); Jonathan Lear (Lear 1982, 384-5); John Koethe (Koethe 1996, 1); Bernard Williams (Williams 1981, 163) and Newton Garver (Garver 1989, 89 and 130-1).

[3] The view that the say-show distinction is rejected is held by, amongst others, Peter Hacker (Hacker 2000, 95); Norman Malcolm (Malcolm 1986, 65 and Chapter 5, particularly 84); Gordon Baker (Baker 1988 112-113); Hans-Johann Glock, (Glock 1996, 262); Ronald Suter (Suter 1989,

shown but not said. Dale Jacquette, who claims that the *Investigations* rejects the say-show distinction, highlights this point and concludes:

> The *Tractatus* loses its grip on the fundamental semantic distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown. (Jacquette 1998, 174)[4]

This first argument supposes that, because the say-show distinction is an unworkable doctrine, it is highly likely that Wittgenstein himself would have recognised this and abandoned the doctrine for that reason. The second type of argument does not need to establish the incoherence of the doctrine, it merely needs to appeal to the familiar idea that the *Investigations* would reject any philosophical doctrine, especially a metaphysical doctrine, whether it is coherent or not. This is Ronald Suter's view:

> The early Wittgenstein thinks that, strictly speaking [metaphysical] truths can only be shown, not said. The later Wittgenstein completely rejects this conception of philosophy and no longer appeals to his earlier technical distinction between what can be said and what can be shown. (Suter 1989, 3)

Commentators who accept this line of argument can either claim that there is a doctrine in the *Investigations* that refutes the doctrine of the *Tractatus*, or they can claim that the anti-doctrinal method of the *Investigations* rejects the doctrines of the *Tractatus*. The former claim is inconsistent with the view that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is anti-doctrinal, but is nonetheless defended by numerous writers. The latter claim is better at preserving consistency.

If we accept any of the Metaphysical Readings of the say-show distinction, both of these arguments are valid. It is correct to say that the distinction is an incoherent doctrine and it is true that a doctrine about ineffable metaphysical truths would be exactly the kind of philosophical nonsense that the *Investigations* would aim to dispel. Many commentators arguing that Wittgenstein rejected the

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3); Simon Glendinning (Glendinning 1998, 84) and Dale Jacquette (Jacquette 1998, 174 and 186-7).

[4] Elsewhere he says "the semantic distinction between saying and showing [...] is [...] undone" (Jacquette 1998, 186); and, there is a "rupture of the saying-showing distinction" (Jacquette 1998, 187).

say-show distinction use a version of both arguments. The strongest advocate of this view is Peter Hacker:

> The author of the *Tractatus* laboured to reveal that the structure of the world cannot be described but only shown. The author of the *Investigations* bent his efforts to reveal how what seemed to show itself was an optical illusion. (Hacker 1986, 168)

Hacker has recently published a sustained attack on the idea that the say-show distinction has a role in the *Investigations* (Hacker 2002, Ch.5). His position is only convincing if we accept his interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. Although I oppose his stance in my own interpretation, I do acknowledge that this view – that the say-show distinction is a serious, positive doctrine in the *Tractatus* that is rejected in the *Investigations* – is most plausible if a Metaphysical Reading is used.

To defend one of the Metaphysical Readings and argue that the say-show distinction is retained as a doctrine in the *Investigations* as well as the *Tractatus*, commentators must contend with the apparent fact that the distinction is incoherent. This might be done in two different ways. First, it can be argued that the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* is not paradoxical and incoherent, but this is a dead-end. Although some commentators make valiant attempts to defend the coherence of the distinction, critics are quick to point out that insofar as these writers attempt to say what it is that Wittgenstein says cannot be said, their own attempts, too, must dissolve into incoherence. One example is Hanfling's incredulous reaction to the Hintikka's account:

> Wittgenstein, we are told, adhered throughout his career to the 'ineffability of semantics'; and this would prevent him from saying what he really thought about language and reality. *He* cannot tell it; *they* can! (Hanfling 1987, 530)[5]

In any case, even if a commentator were to demonstrate that the say-show distinction is a coherent doctrine, a further problem remains: the *Investigations* rejects philosophical doctrines. This line of argument seems doomed.

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[5] For more details of the Hintikka's argument see footnote 9.

Second, it is left to commentators to concede to their opponents that the distinction in the *Tractatus* is an incoherent doctrine, but now claim that the *Investigations* has a non-paradoxical and coherent version.[6] Newton Garver attempts this:

> Wittgenstein continued to employ basic dichotomies of the dualism [by 'dualism' Garver means 'the say-show distinction'] of the *Tractatus*. He disguised them, he spurned fixed terminology, he denied them any metaphysical foundation, and he insisted that the distinctions might shift from here to there; but the distinctions are still present. (Garver 1989, 130)

Garver's point is that Wittgenstein has to modify the say-show distinction to avoid the incoherence of the *Tractatus*, but that nonetheless the distinction has an important role to play in the *Investigations*. One difficulty with this type of argument is how to identify the improved distinction with the incoherent distinction in the *Tractatus*. There is a tension between admitting that there is a radical difference between the two doctrines – one is incoherent, the other coherent – and yet claiming that they are one and the same distinction.[7] Lear has a controversial solution to this problem. He argues that the say-show distinction is incoherent in the *Tractatus* because Wittgenstein says something about it. He proposes that Wittgenstein still maintains the distinction in the *Investigations* but avoids incoherence by not saying anything at all about it.[8]

> If the truths of philosophy cannot be said, then one cannot say that they cannot be said, for one cannot say what it is that cannot be said. This is the self-conscious incoherence of the *Tractatus*. In the *Investigations*,

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[6] There is a different, more unusual alternative, to which my objections nonetheless apply. Priest argues that Wittgenstein appeals to 'what cannot be said' in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, but this doctrine is *incoherent* in both. Priest argues that the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* is incoherent and that Wittgenstein makes essentially the same mistake in the *Investigations* even though he does not say anything about it:

> Wittgenstein's account of rule-following entails that the major conclusions of his skeptical arguments cannot be expressed. The situation is the same as that in the *Tractatus*. But whilst in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein chose to make this conclusion explicit, in the *Investigations* he had grown more canny (if Kripke is correct), refusing to state the point, and merely hinting at it. (Priest 1995, 234)

[7] This tension is apparent in various commentaries, for example C.A. Van Peursen claims that "in Wittgenstein's later work ['showing'] was to become more central and, to a certain extent, even sayable" (Van Peursen 1969, 46).

[8] Cox and Cox use the same argument, they claim that in Wittgenstein's later work the teaching that "the world is ineffable, is hinted at but not said, true to his own dictum of not saying what could not be said" (Cox and Cox 1984, 53). They claim that this 'hint' is found in the metaphor of "awakening and light and vision as the meaning of genesis or creation" (ibid.).

> Wittgenstein does not discuss how philosophy can, after all, be said: he passes over that subject in silence. The *Investigations* should, I think be seen as an act of pointing. (Lear 1982, 385)

This argument fails because it faces a dilemma: if the argument is based solely on the claim that Wittgenstein says nothing about the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*, then it has no answer to the counter-argument that this 'evidence' equally shows that Wittgenstein abandons the distinction. On the other hand, if Lear provides evidence that the distinction is not incoherent in the *Investigations*, then this attempts to say what Wittgenstein believed could not be said and the argument will dissolve into incoherence.[9] Edwards, who uses the same line of argument as Lear, seems happy to impale himself on the second horn of this dilemma. He acknowledges that his own attempt to say what cannot be said is necessarily incoherent, but claims that his book nonetheless points to an ineffable truth about the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*: "what is said here about Wittgenstein's vision is, paradoxically enough, itself an attempt to show what cannot properly be said" (Edwards 1985, 9).[10] This approach is unconvincing, and should serve as a *reductio ad absurdum* for this type of interpretation of the say-show distinction – we should not accept that the distinction grants commentators total exemption from ordinary argument and a licence to be correct no matter what they say or do not say about the distinction, especially when what they say is incoherent. It is acceptable to claim that whatever we say about the distinction is incoherent or paradoxical, but it is not acceptable to imagine that the incoherent things we say about the distinction show a truth about the distinction. Not least

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[9] The Hintikka's claim that Wittgenstein uses the say-show distinction in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, but argue as follows:

> In his early work, Wittgenstein had spoken freely of many subjects which he acknowledged to be unspeakable in the final analysis. He climbed up on a ladder that later he discarded – or perhaps transformed into the slippery rope of showing, as distinguished from the progress of saying. (Cf. *Tractatus* 6.54). In contrast it seems that the later Wittgenstein deprived himself quite deliberately of the corresponding opportunity. (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986, 216)

It is this argument that was criticised by Hanfling (1987, 530). We should also note that Priest agrees that the say-show distinction is present in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, although not discussed in the *Investigations* – though he concludes that the distinction is incoherent in both works, rather than coherent in the *Investigations* as Lear, Edwards and the Hintikkas believe.

[10] Edwards's approach is not unique. Lemoine claims that his own essay is "an attempt to say what [Wittgenstein] was trying to show and it must be a failure insofar as it takes Wittgenstein's sentences out of context. But insofar as the essay, by proceeding obliquely, is a showing rather than a saying, it may be successful" (Lemoine 1975, 43).

because this begs the question by assuming that 'showing' communicates ineffable content, which is precisely the point at issue. In any case there are better alternative approaches that do not require such elaborate conceits.

Garver, Lear, Edwards, and others still face a fundamental problem. If they defend a Metaphysical Reading and assume that the say-show distinction is an incoherent doctrine in the *Tractatus* then they cannot escape the basic objection that the *Investigations* rejects philosophical doctrines. Edwards makes an unsuccessful attempt to escape, by arguing that the say-show distinction is a doctrine in the *Tractatus*, but not a doctrine in the *Investigations*: "here showing is not, as in the *Tractatus*, a philosophical doctrine; it is a defense against doctrine, a way of undercutting the impulse to make philosophical doctrines out of everything" (Edwards 1985, 209). This fails because it amounts to the claim that the say-show distinction of the *Investigations* opposes or rejects the say-show distinction of the *Tractatus*. My first objection is that it is difficult to explain how two such different ideas are one and the same distinction – as we saw when Garver attempted to reconcile an incoherent doctrine with a coherent doctrine. This objection could be met by arguing that there has been a development of a single idea. And even if no such development has taken place, it is also possible to meet the objection by arguing that Wittgenstein replaces one version of the say-show distinction with a totally different version. We can make sense of the idea that Wittgenstein could call two entirely different notions "the say-show distinction", although it would be confusing and perhaps a reason to criticise his account. However, my second objection to Edwards's claim is that there is no justification to call both ideas "the say-show distinction" in the first place. If Wittgenstein has an explicit doctrine of saying and showing in the *Tractatus*, but a method that opposes all such doctrines in the *Investigations*, we need explicit evidence to be convinced that he also believes the latter idea to be "the say-show distinction" – this evidence need only be that he uses that term appropriately in the *Investigations*. However, Wittgenstein does not mention 'showing' or the say-show distinction anywhere in the *Investigations*. So, if the only information we have is that Wittgenstein has an idea in the *Investigations* that totally rejects an idea in the *Tractatus*, then we have no justification to say that both ideas are "the

say-show distinction". It makes a lot more sense to say that the method found in the *Investigations* diametrically opposes the Tractarian doctrine – this is exactly the point used by those who argue that Wittgenstein rejects the distinction in the *Investigations*. The only difference is that these commentators do not make the implausible claim that Wittgenstein's rejection of the Tractarian distinction should also be called "the say-show distinction".

Thus far I have established how difficult it is for commentators with Metaphysical Readings of the say-show distinction to argue that the distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. Before we conclude that this line of interpretation should be abandoned I will discuss a writer who provides the strongest case for the view that I want to reject. My criticism has hinged on two ideas: i) it is highly implausible or unjustifiable to say that the distinction is radically different in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* yet still be the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*; ii) the *Investigations* aims to dispel philosophical doctrines or theses, so if the say-show distinction is any type of doctrine, coherent or not, it would be rejected in the *Investigations*. The view I now discuss resists both of these points, but I argue that the account is nonetheless unsatisfactory.

John Koethe argues that 'showing' is a principle that is central to Wittgenstein's philosophy, early and late.[11] He believes that there is a dual aspect to the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*: one aspect is rejected by the *Investigations*, but the other is retained (Koethe 1996, 43). This is how Koethe can argue that the distinction commits Wittgenstein to a flawed metaphysical doctrine in the *Tractatus*, but he uses a non-metaphysical version of showing in the *Investigations*, and yet claim that it is still the *same* distinction.[12] However, even if Koethe evades my first criticism, his account of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* conflicts with the view that the *Investigations* rejects philosophical doctrines or theories. This is because Koethe denies that view of the

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[11] "A certain broad principle runs throughout his work, both early and late: language's semantic aspects – what a word means, what a sentence says, what its truth conditions are – are *shown* or *manifested* by its use; but these semantic aspects cannot be described or characterized discursively in informative or explanatory ways" (Koethe 1996, 1-2).

[12] "Most of the particular semantic and metaphysical claims of the *Tractatus* stem from doctrines he later repudiated [...]. But, I contend, the principle that language's semantic aspects are shown by its use or application is already present in an incipient way in the *Tractatus* and, far from being

Investigations. He believes that neither the *Tractatus* nor the *Investigations* are entirely non-theoretical or anti-theoretical. He claims that the *Tractatus* contains metaphysical doctrines and, although the *Investigations* is less theoretical than the *Tractatus*,[13] it does contain a constructive vision that involves philosophical theorising.[14] Koethe does not claim that *Investigations* contains doctrines, but instead something he calls a 'conceptualisation'. According to Koethe Wittgenstein's conceptualisation involves a constructive vision of the relation between language and world and it is this relation that is shown but not said (Koethe 1996, 60-67).[15]

Although Koethe does not explicitly call the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* a doctrine, and in this respect his account is not a typical Metaphysical Reading, it is nonetheless the case that he has a doctrinal conception of the say-show distinction. His account of showing commits him to the view that what can be shown but not said are contentful ineffable truths, or in his terminology 'non-factual' claims. Koethe's claim that the relation between language and world is shown in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* is dependent upon the distinction he draws between the factual and the non-factual:

> On my account, the sharp dichotomy between what can be said and what must be shown – and its equation with the distinction between meaningful language and nonsense – is an artifact or consequence of the picture theory of elementary propositions, which the *Tractatus* articulates in detail and which Wittgenstein later abandoned. With its abandonment, the kinds of semantic (and mentalistic) claims that the *Tractatus* construed as meaningless are no longer treated as such, though Wittgenstein continues to regard such claims as nonfactual and to maintain that what they express is shown or manifested by the use of language. (Koethe 1996, 38)

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repudiated, is developed more fully later, freed from entanglement with the earlier doctrines that Wittgenstein did come to reject" (Koethe 1996, 2).

[13] "Where the *Tractatus* went astray was in trying to provide a theoretical articulation of the preconditions for all linguistic or mental representation. The later work abandons such theoretical pretensions and explores, in a much more concrete way, what a term's or sentence's having a use actually involves" (Koethe 1996, 161).

[14] "I think it is an exaggeration to regard the methodology of the *Investigations* as purely descriptive, free of anything that might be thought of as philosophical theorising" (Koethe 1996, 6).

[15] Koethe explicitly aligns his position with the Hintikkas' Metaphysical Reading and against Diamond's Therapeutic Reading (Koethe 1996, 37).

According to Koethe in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, the 'factual' is what can be said and the 'non-factual' is what can be shown. Koethe is committed to the view that there are properties of the world and language that are shown but not said.[16] Although Koethe does not claim that the say-show distinction is a metaphysical doctrine in the *Investigations*, his account is unacceptable because it does not take seriously enough the idea that Wittgenstein is not constructing philosophical theories. The price of accepting Koethe's account is to concede that the *Investigations* is not wholly non-theoretical. Koethe does not, therefore, offer a satisfactory account of the retention of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.

To conclude, if we accept one of the Metaphysical Readings of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*, then we can strongly defend the view that the distinction is rejected in the *Investigations*. If we attempt to defend the view that the distinction is retained then we will be unsuccessful. Concerning such attempts, my main point is that any Metaphysical Reading of the distinction will have to be modified or distorted to such an extent that it is better not to use that interpretation in the first place. A better approach is to look for an alternative interpretation of the distinction in the *Tractatus* and then demonstrate that the same distinction applies in the *Investigations*. We should note that, although we must reject the claims of these commentators about how the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* is related to the *Tractatus*, this does not mean that we should reject their account of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* altogether.[17] Many of these commentators have useful or interesting accounts of the role of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.[18] My view is that to give a convincing

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[16] The list of things that are non-factual and shown but not said include "aspects, properties, states of mind and meanings" (Koethe 1996, 113. See also 166).

[17] For example, my objection to Edwards should not be taken to indicate that I disagree with him that the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* is "a defense against doctrine, a way of undercutting the impulse to make philosophical doctrines out of everything" (Edwards 1985, 209). This is a view I endorse in my own reading of the say-show distinction. The difference is that I believe that this is the correct way to view the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* as well as the *Investigations*.

[18] A selection of examples include James Edwards' view that the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* reappears in Wittgenstein's conception of ethics (Edwards 1985, 105); the Hintikkas' view that it is found in Wittgenstein's conception of language-games (Hintikkas 1981, 85); John Koethe's view that it is found in Wittgenstein's notions of aspect seeing (Koethe 1996, 75) and rule-following (Koethe 1996, 14) and Bernard Williams' view that it is found in Wittgenstein's later version of transcendental idealism (Williams 1981, 163).

account of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations* we need to find a version that fits both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*. Let us now consider a different interpretation of the say-show distinction by asking what proponents of Therapeutic Readings would say about the distinction in the *Investigations*.

2.2 Therapeutic Readings

According to Therapeutic Readings, the say-show distinction is simply one of many examples of philosophical nonsense from which Wittgenstein aims to cure us. It is just the last rung of the ladder which the *Tractatus* asks us to throw away. Therapeutic Readings give a purely deflationary account of the say-show distinction: the notion of a distinction between saying and showing is utter nonsense, not a profound ineffability doctrine.

To date there have been no attempts by proponents of a Therapeutic Reading to explore whether the distinction has any significance for the *Investigations*.[19] However, we can discuss what the outcome of such an attempt would be. Therapeutic Readings have a firm commitment to continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, but do not claim that the say-show distinction is a part of this continuity.[20] They claim that in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* Wittgenstein has the same conception of the *aim* of philosophy – the aim is to provide therapy for philosophical illusions and confusions, to see nonsense as nonsense. Although the *Tractatus* uses the say-show distinction to realise this therapeutic aim, the aim itself is not dependent upon the say-show distinction – a different pseudo-doctrine could have been used instead. Hence even if the *Investigations* has the same philosophical aim as the *Tractatus*, it does not need to involve the say-show distinction.[21] This indicates that proponents of

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[19] Peter Winch comes closest to doing this. He claims that the say-show distinction is a feature of the *Investigations* (Winch 1969, 14-15). He is also opposed to Metaphysical Readings of the say-show distinction (Winch 1987, 4-12) – indeed he supports Therapeutic Readings – but he does not bring these two ideas together. These two views seem to represent different stages of his career and are not held at the same time.

[20] See Alice Crary's introduction to *The New Wittgenstein* for a discussion of the continuity assumed by Therapeutic Readings (Crary and Read 2000, 1-18).

[21] The idea that there is continuity of method as well as aim is not entirely ruled out by proponents of Therapeutic Readings. Crary notes that some advocates of a Therapeutic Reading think that the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* might be unified "to some degree" by method (Crary 2000, 13), but this is not the main point of Therapeutic Readings, which is to claim the books are unified by a single aim. Even if Therapeutic Readings were to argue that Wittgenstein employs the same

Therapeutic Readings will have no reason to think that the say-show distinction is in any way relevant to the *Investigations*.

There is a stronger point of view implicit in Conant's Therapeutic Reading. According to Conant the method of the *Tractatus* is "to offer something that has the appearance of a doctrine and then undermine it from within" (Conant 1995, 298), but:

> When Wittgenstein himself criticises the *Tractatus's* mode of philosophical presentation it is not [...] on the grounds that its doctrine is flawed, but on the grounds that its *method* is flawed: it is inherently dogmatic – the work cultivates the impression that things are being dogmatically asserted. (Conant 1995, 297)

Conant does not explicitly discuss the say-show distinction here, but we can take it that the distinction is the main pseudo-doctrine of the *Tractatus* and the method of the *Tractatus* is to bring the reader to see the doctrine as nonsense, with the aim of providing therapy for philosophical confusion. If this is so, then the implication of Conant's claim is that the say-show distinction was counter-productive to the aim of the *Tractatus* because it was too convincing. It was taken to be a dogmatic assertion, a genuine doctrine, and in most cases not thrown away by its readers. According to this view, the distinction was only created to further the method of the *Tractatus*, but the method was unsuccessful, indeed the say-show distinction contributed to the failure of the method. This is why the method was not repeated in the *Investigations*:

> The discipline to which he subjects his later writing is the following: as far as possible, avoid the impression that anything is put forward as an assertion; avoid anything the reader might seize upon as the doctrine of the work. (Conant 1995, 299)

Conant's view thus goes beyond the previous point that the *Investigations* has no reason to address the say-show distinction, it amounts to the point that there is a good reason for the *Investigations* not to address the distinction.

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therapeutic methods in both works there is no indication that they would treat the say-show distinction as relevant to that method. The distinction is viewed as simply one example of philosophical nonsense that Wittgenstein asks us to throw away.

According to Therapeutic Readings, the say-show distinction must be completely thrown away at the end of the *Tractatus*. We should not hold on to an ineffability doctrine of saying and showing, so there can be no question of whether the distinction has any significance for the *Investigations*.[22] This point entails that even if the say-show distinction is the most important pseudo-doctrine in the *Tractatus*, it must be treated as just one among many examples of philosophical nonsense. According to Therapeutic Readings, all nonsense is logically equivalent – it is all utter nonsense. In this respect the say-show distinction is no different to a manifestly nonsensical theory, such as the ontological primacy of simple objects. The only thing that distinguishes these doctrines is their psychological appearance.[23] I think that there is a problem with this idea – a problem which casts doubt on the value of Therapeutic Readings.

As we have seen, Therapeutic Readings emphasise the continuity of Wittgenstein's philosophical aim throughout his work, which is to make the reader see nonsense as nonsense. I think that the question of the significance of the say-show distinction for the *Investigations* highlights a discrepancy in the overall interpretation. Consider the following example: according to Therapeutic Readings the ontological primacy of simple objects is a pseudo-doctrine in the *Tractatus* that is revealed to be nonsense when the book is read correctly. It is also the case that this pseudo-doctrine is revealed to be nonsense in the *Investigations*. The problem is that, if this pseudo-doctrine is given therapeutic treatment in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, then why is the say-show distinction, which is a more important pseudo-doctrine, not also given attention and revealed to be nonsense in the *Investigations*? It seems strange that it is omitted from the *Investigations* if Wittgenstein's aim there is to provide therapy for philosophical confusions, and if the say-show distinction was the most important confusion of

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[22] When a proponent of a Metaphysical Reading argues that the distinction is an incoherent doctrine, it is reasonable for them to ask whether the doctrine could be made coherent, either in the *Tractatus* or in the *Investigations*. In comparison, when a proponent of a Therapeutic Reading is faced with the idea that the distinction is utter nonsense, there would be no point considering whether the nonsense could be turned into sense in either the *Tractatus* or *Investigations*.

[23] Recall Diamond's argument that, although there are not different logical categories of nonsense: "nonsense sentences are as it were internally all the same" (Diamond 2000, 159), there is a significant psychological difference between seeing a nonsensical sentence as nonsense and seeing the sentence as though it has sense. We can "distinguish nonsense-sentences by the external circumstances of their utterance" (Diamond 2000, 161).

the *Tractatus*. This criticism has established that Therapeutic Readings need to explain why Wittgenstein devotes pages of the *Investigations* to demonstrating that lesser Tractarian pseudo-doctrines are indeed nonsense, but does not mention the say-show distinction. Now I argue that the most likely response to this challenge will fail. The most appropriate defence for Therapeutic Readings is to claim that the distinction was successfully shown to be nonsense in the *Tractatus*, so there is no need to demonstrate that it is nonsense once again in *Investigations*. This response fails because it contradicts Conant's view that the method of the *Tractatus* was unsuccessful and the say-show distinction was not adequately revealed to be nonsense. There may be other responses open to proponents of a Therapeutic Reading, but the fact that none are currently available is a weakness in this interpretation.

We might wonder if Therapeutic Readings would accept that the *Investigations* does reject the say-show distinction in some sense. After all, if we apply the philosophical ideas of the *Investigations* to the pseudo-doctrine version of the distinction, it would be rejected as nonsense. This may be true, but it does not enable us to use the say-show distinction to enhance our understanding of the *Investigations*. Nor does it mean that there is continuity between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* – where continuity might be that they both reveal that the say-show distinction is nonsense. There is no continuity because although the *Investigations* would make us see that the say-show distinction is nonsense, it would do so in a very different way to the *Tractatus* – it would involve a different philosophical method. Rather than say that the *Investigations* rejects the say-show distinction, all we should say is that it would be impossible to use Therapeutic Readings to argue that the distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. This conclusion explains why proponents of Therapeutic Readings have not explored the implications of their reading for the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.

I think that the failure of any Therapeutic Reading to support the significance of the say-show distinction for the *Investigations* is an indication that this type of interpretation is impoverished. The mistake can be traced to the failure to give a central role to say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* – to take seriously

enough the idea that it is important for Wittgenstein's philosophy. I agree with Adrian Moore:

> To compare Wittgenstein's later work with the *Tractatus* [...] in such a way that a saying/showing distinction arises in the later work, is [...] deeply instructive and seminal. (Moore 1987, 490)

Moore's position lends support to the idea that we must look for an alternative to the Metaphysical and Therapeutic Readings. He shares with McGinn the view that we must give a central role to the say-show distinction without treating it as ineffable metaphysics or empty nonsense. Moore's account is not exegetical, so it is McGinn's Elucidatory Reading I consider next.

2.3 An Elucidatory Reading

According to McGinn's Elucidatory Reading, the distinction between saying and showing is an elucidatory element of the *Tractatus* (McGinn 1999, 498). The say-show distinction is used as philosophical device to transform our vision of language for a particular purpose. After the say-show distinction has elucidated our language it is 'thrown away', but only because it has exhausted its use, not because it is self-referentially incoherent or a mistaken view which needs therapy.

What happens when we use the Elucidatory Reading of the say-show distinction to explore the significance of the distinction in the *Investigations*? This has not yet been attempted, but I think that McGinn's Elucidatory Reading would *only* support the claim that the say-show distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. McGinn claims that the core elucidations are "central to the whole of Wittgenstein's philosophy, early and late" (McGinn 1999, 497). As the say-show distinction is a core elucidation (McGinn 1999, 498), this means that the Elucidatory Reading supports not just continuity between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, but more specifically continuity of the say-show distinction. McGinn does not connect these two points and does not make any explicit claims about the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.

McGinn's Elucidatory Reading proposes that there is continuity of aim and method between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* because both works employ

the same elucidatory strategy.[24] The elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus* involves using the say-show distinction to elucidate language – indeed the distinction is the most important elucidation in the *Tractatus*. If Wittgenstein employs the same elucidatory strategy in the *Investigations* as in the *Tractatus* then it makes sense for the say-show distinction to feature in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, although only as an elucidation rather than a theory, explanation or doctrine. If this is the case then the challenge is to develop an account of how the say-show distinction is part of the elucidatory strategy of the *Investigations*. McGinn has not yet indicated how this might be done.

I have sketched a general explanation of why an Elucidatory Reading could argue that the say-show distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. However, at another level, McGinn's Elucidatory Reading *necessarily* entails that the distinction is retained. According to McGinn, the *Tractatus* consists of two 'strands' – elucidations and non-elucidations. The former are important ideas which Wittgenstein re-affirms in his later work. The latter are misconceptions which he later rejects. McGinn would probably agree that when Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus* he did not deliberately incorporate two 'strands' – one of which he knew to be misconceived. Her identification of the two strands is therefore based on a post-*Investigations* reading of the *Tractatus*. In other words, those aspects of the *Tractatus* which are elucidatory or non-elucidatory have been judged to be so from the perspective of the *Investigations*. Take for example the claim that the requirement for the determinacy of sense is a non-elucidatory part of the *Tractatus* – this claim is based on the fact that the determinacy of sense is "thrown off" in the *Investigations* (McGinn 1999, 497). In the same way, McGinn's claim that the say-show distinction is an elucidatory strand of the *Tractatus* means that she has already judged that the distinction is not a misconception that the *Investigations* rejects. In other words, she holds the view that the say-show distinction is an elucidation in the *Tractatus* because she holds the view that the distinction is as elucidation in the *Investigations*, even though she does not make the latter point explicit. This has significant implications: we

[24] This continuity between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* is even stronger than that assumed by Therapeutic Readings, which accept that there is continuity of aim – but claim that the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* employ different methods to achieve the therapeutic aim.

may use McGinn's Elucidatory Reading to argue that the say-show distinction features in the *Investigations*, but it is not possible to use it against this view without rendering the reading itself incoherent.[25]

The claim that Wittgenstein has continuity of method – rather than doctrine – in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* is one of the most important messages of McGinn's Elucidatory Reading. I believe that adopting this view will help me pursue the idea that the say-show distinction is retained in the *Investigations*. McGinn does not attempt to establish that the say-show distinction is more than just an elucidation. If it can be established that the say-show distinction is part of Wittgenstein's method, and he has the same method in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations,* then we have good reason to think that the say-show distinction is a feature of both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.

I depart from McGinn's account in arguing that we should not see the say-show distinction just as an elucidation, but rather the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical elucidation. This amounts to the claim that the say-show distinction is fundamental to Wittgenstein's method, not just an important elucidation used in the application of his method. To support this I will demonstrate that Wittgenstein bases his conception of philosophy on the say-show distinction in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*.

3 Summary and Comment

There are various other reasons, some discussed in chapter 3, for arguing that one of these three readings is better than the others. However, the specific issue which concerns me here is which reading best supports the claim that we can use the say-show distinction to understand the *Investigations*. I conclude that i) Metaphysical Readings are best suited to defend the view that Wittgenstein rejects the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*. ii) Therapeutic Readings would only be able to defend the view that the say-show distinction is not retained in the *Investigations*. iii) McGinn's Elucidatory Reading would only be able to defend

[25] It might seem possible to argue for a discontinuity thesis by claiming that the say-show distinction is part of the non-elucidatory strand in the *Tractatus*; but this runs counter to the central thrust of an Elucidatory Reading, which is to establish that the say-show distinction is the main point of the *Tractatus* (see McGinn 1999, 496 fn.12).

the view that the say-show distinction is retained in the *Investigations* as well as the *Tractatus*.

I further conclude that it is possible to offer a convincing case for the view that the say-show distinction has a role in the *Investigations* only if you have a view of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* that assumes it is not a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine. This is the interpretation I offer in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*

Content

1 Introduction

In this chapter I present my own interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*.[1] I propose that the say-show distinction is the central point of the *Tractatus* as it is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and the main aim of the *Tractatus* is to introduce this new conception of philosophy. The focus of my interpretation is the remarks in the preface and conclusion that summarise the main point of the *Tractatus*.[2] Wittgenstein states that "the whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (TLP Preface p.3). The same statement is reaffirmed as the final remark of the *Tractatus*: "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (TLP 7). In what follows I explain how these remarks sum up Wittgenstein's proposal for his conception of philosophy, and demonstrate that this conception is based on the say-show distinction. I use the phrase 'conception of philosophy' to encompass several related ideas including the nature of philosophical problems, the appropriate methods of philosophy, the end result of a philosophical task and the overall aim of philosophy. To say that the say-show distinction is the basis of this conception is to say that the distinction is what we need to understand if we are to properly understand the conception of philosophy.

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[1] I have provided full quotes in the footnotes, rather than just references to proposition numbers. This is to assist the reader, where needed, in following the exegesis.
[2] In a letter to Ficker Wittgenstein said that "the preface and the conclusion [...] contain the most direct expression of the point of the book" (cited in Janik & Toulmin 1973, 192).

2 Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus*

The main purpose of the *Tractatus* is not to present a theory of language, logic or ontology. Nor is the main purpose to criticise or solve particular philosophical problems, such as Russell's theory of types. The main purpose is to replace traditional philosophical enquiry with an alternative conception of philosophy. The preface states:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. (TLP Preface p.3)

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein tackles several specific philosophical problems, but he does not do this simply to solve the problems. Instead he uses the treatment of particular issues to illustrate his general view of philosophical problems. Similarly, although the *Tractatus* does contain a highly influential picture of logic and language and the stated aim of the *Tractatus* is to "draw a limit to [...] the expression of thoughts" (TLP Preface p.3) this aim is only the means to a further goal, which is to offer "on all essential points the final solution of the problems [of philosophy]" (TLP Preface p.4). The ultimate value of the work is not the solutions to particular problems, or a new theory or doctrine, but "that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved" (TLP Preface p.4).

I outline Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy by giving an account of the nature of philosophical problems, the correct method for philosophy, the outcome of a philosophical task and the ultimate aim of philosophical activity. In the process I establish that the say-show distinction is the basis for all of these. I also discuss the relation between the conception of philosophy presented in the *Tractatus* and the task of the *Tractatus* itself.

2.1 The nature of philosophical problems

Towards the end of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein emphasises that for something to be a genuine problem it must be something that can be said: "if a question can be framed at all, it is also possible to answer it" (TLP 6.5), "a question only [exists] where an answer exists, and an answer only where something *can be said*" (TLP 6.51). His criticism of the traditional conception of philosophy is that

philosophical questions and answers are treated as things that can be said, but in fact they do not say anything, nor is there anything that can be said that would settle the disputes.[3] According to Wittgenstein, if we can reveal that philosophical problems do not say anything, then this demonstrates that they are not genuine problems and when the illusion vanishes so too will the problem, because the 'problem' is just an illusion. It is the illusion that something can be said, when in fact nothing can be said. If a problem has an answer that can be said, it is a problem of natural science.[4] If a problem does not have an answer that can be said, it is not a genuine problem but a confusion and can be removed by philosophical methods. This is why, for Wittgenstein, "all philosophy is a critique of language" (TLP 4.0031), rather than either an empirical or an *a priori* investigation.

To make good his critique of the traditional conception of philosophical problems, Wittgenstein needs to establish how we can tell whether an utterance says something. In the *Tractatus* he believed that we cannot tell whether an utterance says something just by examining its appearance, because the outward appearance does not reveal the underlying logic: "it is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is" (TLP 4.002). To elucidate the difference between the appearance and the underlying logic, Wittgenstein draws our attention to the difference between the propositional symbol and the propositional sign. The symbol is the "part of the proposition that characterises its sense" (TLP 3.31). The sign is the part of the proposition that can be perceived – it is the visible mark, the audible sound; "a sign is what can be perceived of a symbol" (TLP 3.32). The symbol is what is essential to the sense of the proposition[5], the sign is arbitrary.[6] So according to Wittgenstein if we want to

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[3] E.g. "Scepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked" (TLP 6.51).

[4] "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences)." (TLP 4.11)

[5] "Everything essential to their sense that propositions can have in common with one another is an expression" (TLP 3.31).

[6] "For the sign of course is arbitrary" (TLP 3.322). "Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the proposition could not express its sense" (TLP 3.34).

know whether a proposition actually says something we must look at the symbol, not the sign.

It is the difference between the symbol and the sign that causes many philosophical confusions.[7] Wittgenstein's example is the proposition "Green is green" (TLP 3.323). The word 'green' is a single sign, but does not represent just one symbol. There are two symbols – one is a proper name, the other an adjective. Confusions are created for many different reasons – they do not all take the form of a sign that has more than one symbol. But, in general, the form of a philosophical problem is that it appears to say something (or requires something to be said) at the level of the sign, but in fact says nothing (nothing can be said) at the level of the symbol. Here is an example to illustrate the point: according to Wittgenstein one type of confusion occurs because logical constants are treated as though they represent objects of reality. For example, the negation sign looks like an ordinary sign (i.e. a name), so philosophers have been led to believe that the logical sign corresponds to a logical object, just as a name corresponds to a material object.[8] Frege and Russell had this mistaken view of logical constants.[9] But although a logical constant is a sign, it does not function as an ordinary name at the level of the symbol; specifically it does not have a representing relation to an object.[10] A proposition that treats a logical constant as though it is a name may appear to say something, but actually says nothing.[11] To elucidate the point Wittgenstein draws attention to the idea that there is no logical object

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[7] "In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (the whole of philosophy is full of them)" (TLP 3.324).

[8] "It is important that the signs '*p*' and '*~p*' *can* say the same thing. For it shows that nothing in reality corresponds to the sign '~'" (TLP 4.0621).

[9] "It becomes manifest that there are no 'logical objects' or 'logical constants' (in Frege and Russell's sense)" (TLP 5.4).

[10] "My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the logic of facts" (TLP 4.0312)

[11] When Wittgenstein elucidates the problem, we are asked to see that a logical constant does not function as a name at the level of the logical symbol. This shows itself in the relation between propositions that employ the sign: "if there were an object called '~', it would follow that '~~*p*' said something different from what '*p*' said, just because the one proposition would be about '~' and the other would not" (TLP 5.44)

corresponding to the 'T' in a truth-table, just as there is no logical object corresponding to the horizontal and vertical lines, or to the brackets.[12]

Before considering more types of confusion, I wish to elaborate my main contention about Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical problems. I suggest that the *Tractatus* offers not just a treatment of particular problems, but a diagnosis of the problem of the problems of philosophy, i.e. the cardinal problem of philosophy. The full importance of elucidating the cardinal problem of philosophy is that it also provides the "final solution" to all the problems of philosophy. The *Tractatus* helps us see that the different types of philosophical problem all have something in common. Their general form is that they appear to say something, but say nothing. They can only remain a problem for as long as we continue to think that something is being said; in other words there is only a problem insofar as we remain confused. If we can remove the confusion then we will remove the problem. The nature of the confusion is that we fail to see the logic clearly. Wittgenstein claims that "most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language" (TLP 4.003).

From a traditional perspective, the obvious solution to such confusion would be to explain the logic clearly. In other words it looks like the problem is caused because there is something we don't know – we don't know enough about the logic of language – so once we have explained the logic we will have solved the problem. This approach involves a fundamental mistake that will not solve the problem but merely generate further confusion. It involves precisely the mistake that is at issue – i.e. the mistake that is constitutive of philosophical problems. This mistake can only be understood in terms of the say-show distinction. If we are to avoid confusion, Wittgenstein asks us to acknowledge that logic is not something that can be said. It is not something that can be explained and put into words. It is here that we see the most distinctive aspect of Wittgenstein's account. Logic cannot be said because it shows itself and "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said" (TLP 4.1212). This is the main role of the say-show distinction. If we try to

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[12] "It is clear that a complex of the signs 'F' and 'T' has no object (or complex of objects) corresponding to it, just as there is none corresponding to the horizontal and vertical lines or to the

explain logic, we will be saying nothing but thinking that we are saying something. Hence our remarks will be nonsense, but we will think they have sense. This is the confusion that characterises a philosophical problem. The say-show distinction is therefore the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of a philosophical problem. I have already mentioned one type of problem, but in the following brief survey, I demonstrate how various types of philosophical confusion are to be understood not just as linguistic confusions, but as confusions that involve the say-show distinction.

A second type of mistake concerns *internal properties*. This occurs either when the internal (formal) properties of objects are confused with their external (material) properties; or, similarly, when the internal (structural) properties of facts are confused with their external properties.[13] This is similar to a third type of mistake, which concerns *internal relations*.[14] This is caused either by a confusion between internal (formal) relations of objects and their external relations, or by a confusion between the internal (structural) relations of facts and their external relations.[15] In confusions concerning both internal properties and internal relations (of objects or facts) the important point is that the confusion is not simply between different types of property or relation – it is not simply a category mistake. What distinguishes the problem as a philosophical confusion is that it involves the say-show distinction. It is an attempt to say something that cannot be said, an attempt to put into words what shows itself in language.

> It is impossible, however, to assert by means of propositions that such internal properties and relations obtain: rather, this shows itself *(es zeigt sich)* in the propositions that represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects. (TLP 4.122)

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brackets. – There are no logical objects" (TLP 4.441).

[13] See (TLP 4.122) to (TLP 4.1241).

[14] "I introduce these expressions in order to indicate the source of the confusion between internal relations and relations proper (external relations), which is very widespread among philosophers" (TLP 4.122).

[15] See (TLP 4.122) to (TLP 4.1252).

Wittgenstein claims that an internal property of an object, an internal property of a possible situation (a fact) *expresses itself* in language.[16] Similarly an internal relation between facts *expresses itself* in language.[17] Internal properties and relations are features of logical form, they show themselves in language, but cannot be said in language.[18] For example, one type of internal relation is that which is equivalent to an operation.[19] An operation does not say anything, it merely shows itself:

> An operation shows itself *(zeigt sich)* in a variable; it shows how we can get from one form of proposition to another. (TLP 5.24)

Wittgenstein treats negation and other logical 'constants' as operations.[20] So now it is clearer where the real problem lay with the first, previously mentioned, type of problem. This was a confusion about *logical constants* (e.g. negation), it was the illusion that reality contains logical objects which correspond to the signs for logical constants. The mistake is not simply that one type of sign has been confused with a different type of sign, the mistake involves the say-show distinction at a fundamental level. The mistake is to assume that logical signs *say* something about logical objects instead of seeing that a logical sign says nothing because a logical operation such as negation *shows itself* in the internal relations between propositions. The internal relation is logical form, which shows itself but cannot be said.

A fourth type of mistake concerns *formal concepts*.[21] These problems occur when there is a confusion between formal concepts and proper concepts.[22] The important point is that an ordinary concept can be expressed by means of a

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[16] "The existence of an internal property of a possible situation is not expressed by means of a proposition: rather it expresses itself in the proposition representing the situation, by means of an internal property of that proposition" (TLP 4.124)

[17] "The existence of an internal relation between possible situations expresses itself in language by means of an internal relation between the propositions representing them" (TLP 4.125).

[18] "What expresses itself in language, we cannot express by means of language. Propositions *show* the logical form of reality. They display it" (TLP 4.121).

[19] "The internal relation by which a series is ordered is equivalent to the operation that produces one term from another" (TLP 5.232).

[20] "Negation, logical addition, logical multiplication etc. etc. are operations" (TLP 5.2341)

[21] "(I introduce this expression in order to exhibit the source of the confusion between formal concepts and concepts proper, which pervades the whole of traditional logic)" (TLP 4.126).

[22] See (TLP 4.126) to (TLP 4.1274).

function, but a formal concept cannot be represented in this way. This is because a formal concept does not say anything, a formal concept shows itself in language:

> When something falls under a formal concept as one of its objects, this cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Instead it shows itself *(es zeigt sich)* in the very sign for this object. (A name shows that it signifies an object, a sign for a number that it signifies a number, etc.). (TLP 4.126)

If the sign for a formal concept is used as though it is the sign for a proper concept, it will appear to say something at the level of the sign, but at the level of the symbol it will say nothing. Thus the proposition will be nonsense, although it may appear to have sense.[23]

This survey is not comprehensive, but illustrates how the *Tractatus* elucidates philosophical problems specifically in terms of the say-show distinction.[24] My claim should not be misinterpreted as the view that philosophical problems have the following form: there are ineffable features of reality (ineffable properties, objects, relations) that can be shown but they cannot said. The correct view is that philosophical problems have the following form: it appears that something needs to be said about a feature of reality, when in fact if we look to what shows itself in language we will realise that nothing needs to be said. Using the correct interpretation reveals that the diagnosis of a problem as a confusion at the same time provides the means for the problem to disappear. This is why the say-show distinction elucidates both the cardinal problem of philosophy and the final solution for the problems of philosophy. In order to see clearly what can be said, so that we can see whether or not a philosophical proposition says anything, we must pay attention to what shows itself. What shows itself is not something that can be said. So, how should we pay attention to what shows itself in order to see clearly what can be said? To answer this question I now turn to Wittgenstein's account of the correct method for philosophy.

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[23] "Whenever [the word 'object'] is used [...] as a proper concept word, nonsensical pseudo-propositions are the result" (TLP 4.1272).

[24] I discuss a further type of philosophical confusion in the following section – the confusion that arises if logical propositions are treated as though they are ordinary propositions.

2.2 Philosophical Method

> The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science – i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy – and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. (TLP 6.53)[25]

This 'correct method' is what Wittgenstein calls for when he says "what can be said at all can be said clearly" (TLP Preface p.3). There are two aspects to Wittgenstein's philosophical method: we must clarify confusions by revealing nonsense that is masquerading as sense. We can also avoid making such errors by using a sign language that excludes them.[26] Wittgenstein says more about removing confusions than avoiding confusions and I do the same.

According to the *Tractatus*, if we want to tell whether or not a proposition says something, we should not seek to determine whether the proposition is true or false.[27] Instead the issue is to determine whether or not the proposition has sense – to have sense is to have both the possibility of being true and the possibility of being false. If we wanted to tell whether a proposition was true we would compare it to reality,[28] this is the task of natural science. We want to tell whether a proposition has sense so we must not look to reality, but look to its logical form.[29] This is the task of philosophy. As I have explained, to see the logical form we need to look beyond the propositional sign to the propositional symbol. As the signs are what we actually perceive, Wittgenstein explains how we can recognise a symbol from the propositional sign. He claims "in order to

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[25] He makes the same point when he claims that "most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical" (TLP 4.003).

[26] "In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is a sign-language that is governed by logical grammar – by logical syntax" (TLP 3.325).

[27] "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science" (TLP 4.11). "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences" (TLP 4.111). "Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science" (TLP 4.113). It does this by determining the totality of propositions with *sense*.

[28] "In order to tell whether a proposition is true or false we must compare it with reality" (TLP 2.223).

[29] We do not look to the content of the proposition, we look to its form. "A proposition contains the form but not the content of its sense" (TLP 3.13).

recognise a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense" (TLP 3.326). We should not look at the appearance, but look at how the proposition is used.[30] This is because all the propositions that serve the same logical purpose have the same sense.[31] Another way of putting this is that all the propositions that are logically equivalent have the same use.[32]

Wittgenstein believes that if a proposition says something, it has a determinate sense that can be set out clearly.[33] It can be set out clearly because it can be fully analysed.[34] Fully analysed means that the analysis is complete and final. The logical analysis is always determinate because symbols are essential, they are guaranteed by logical space and every symbol gives the whole of logical space.[35] Logical space is a complete, unified system. To identify the propositional symbol we need to look at the class of all the propositions that have the same logical essence in common.[36] The symbol is a variable whose values are all the propositions that it characterises.[37] The sense of the symbol is also what is common to all the symbols that can be substituted for it.[38] To identify the symbol we need to recognise the variable, this is done by stipulating all the values for the variable.[39] This just means describing all the propositions that have the same

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[30] "(In philosophy, the question 'What do we actually use this word or this proposition for?' repeatedly leads to valuable insights.)" (TLP 6.211).
[31] "What is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that express the same sense have in common. And similarly, in general, what is essential in a symbol is what all symbols that can serve the same purpose have in common" (TLP 3.341).
[32] "Signs that serve *one* purpose are logically equivalent, and signs that serve *none* are logically meaningless" (TLP 5.47321). "If a sign is *useless* it is meaningless. That is the point of Occam's maxim" (TLP 3.328).
[33] "What a proposition expresses it expresses in a determinate manner, which can be set out clearly" (TLP 3.251).
[34] "A proposition has one and only one complete analysis" (TLP 3.25).
[35] "A proposition determines a place in logical space. The existence of the logical places is guaranteed by the [...] existence of the proposition with sense" (TLP 3.4). "A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already by given by it" (TLP 3.42). "The force of a proposition reaches through the whole of logical space" (TLP 3.42).
[36] "[An expression] is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions" (TLP 3.311).
[37] "An expression is presented by means of a variable whose values are the propositions that contain the expression" (TLP 3.312).
[38] "What signifies in a symbol is what is common to all the symbols that the rules of logical syntax allow us to substitute for it" (TLP 3.344).
[39] "To stipulate values for a propositional variable is to give the propositions whose common characteristic the variable is" (TLP 3.316).

symbol – the same sense – i.e. the same logical purpose.[40] The stipulation does not require us to *say* what the sense of the symbol is, the sense of the symbol *shows itself* when we stipulate the propositions.[41] In other words the propositions show what it is that they have in common – their logical form. The logical form is not something that is said.[42] We do not describe the logical form, we stipulate all the propositions that have the same logical form and in so doing the logical form of the propositions shows itself.[43] The symbol shows itself and the symbol is equivalent to the rule of logical syntax.[44] The rules of logical syntax show themselves, they simply are what all the values of a variable have in common.[45]

The important point is that every proposition with sense both says something and shows something.[46] When a proposition *says* something, all this means is that it affirms the sense that it *shows*. If we want to tell whether a proposition has sense we do not need to make statements about the sense of the proposition. We just need to look at how it stands in logical relations with other propositions with sense. The relationship between propositions with sense is what Wittgenstein calls an internal relation and internal relations are shown but not said.[47] The internal relationship between all the propositions that share a symbol shows itself. It shows itself whenever the propositions are used. As we saw with the problems already discussed, this set of internal relations is not something that can be stated by other propositions. If this were possible it would set up a

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[40] The stipulation is a description of the propositions that are the values, but the description can be done in several different ways. Wittgenstein lists three different ways in TLP 5.501.

[41] "It is impossible to assert the *identity* of meaning of two expressions. For in order to be able to assert anything about their meaning, I must know their meaning, and I cannot know their meaning without knowing whether what they mean is the same or different" (TLP 6.2322).

[42] "Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical form. In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say, outside the world" (TLP 4.12).

[43] "If two expressions are combined by means of the sign of equality, that means that they can be substituted for one another. But [whether this is the case must show itself] in the two expressions. When two expressions can be substituted for one another, that characterises their logical form" (TLP 6.23 – the modified section is from the Ogden translation).

[44] "These rules are equivalent to the symbols; and in them their sense is mirrored" (TLP 5.514).

[45] "The rules of logical syntax must go without saying, once we know how each individual sign signifies" (TLP 3.334).

[46] "A proposition *shows* its sense. A proposition *shows* how things stand *if* it is true. And it *says that* they do so stand" (TLP 4.022).

regress.[48] Logical form shows itself in the internal relations between the totality of all propositions with sense.[49] The whole of logic is shown in ordinary propositions.[50] The totality of logical form is shown in every proposition with sense.[51] Logic is something that cannot itself be put into words.[52]

We might imagine that if we cannot explain logic using ordinary propositions, then the answer is to do so using so-called 'logical propositions'. But this is to misunderstand logical propositions. An ordinary proposition has sense; it both says something and shows logical form. A logical proposition is senseless; it says nothing and only shows logical form.[53] Logical propositions are not nonsense; they are within language because they are part of the symbolism.[54] Logical propositions are produced when ordinary propositions are combined in such a way that they no longer say anything but merely show their logical form.[55] Although logical propositions show logical form, the correct method of philosophy does not involve using logical propositions rather than ordinary propositions. It is wrong to imagine that the end result of logical analysis is to collect a body of logical propositions.[56] Logical propositions show their logical form, but in itself this is not sufficient to solve philosophical problems.[57] The treatment of confusions is achieved by elucidating the logical form of ordinary propositions, not simply admiring the logical form that shows itself in logical

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[47] "It is impossible, however, to assert by means of propositions that such internal properties and relations obtain: rather this makes itself manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects" (TLP 4.122).
[48] "Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical form" (TLP 4.12).
[49] "The existence of an internal relation between possible situations expresses itself in language by means of an internal relation between the propositions representing them" (TLP 4.125).
[50] "Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. [...] Propositions show the logical form of reality. They display it" (TLP 4.121).
[51] "A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it" (TLP 3.42).
[52] "My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the logic of facts" (TLP 4.0312).
[53] "Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing" (TLP 4.461).
[54] "Tautologies and contradictions are not, however, nonsensical. They are part of the symbolism" (TLP 4.4611).
[55] When they cancel each other out in this way they produce tautologies or contradictions. Wittgenstein calls this process the "zero-method" (TLP 6.121).
[56] "Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world" (TLP 6.13).

propositions. Logical propositions are not superior to ordinary propositions. By uttering a logical proposition a philosopher cannot achieve greater access to the logical form of reality. Nor would a collection of propositions that show the logical form of language or the world thereby give us satisfaction as though we had acquired direct access to ineffable truths.[58]

Logical propositions are not necessary for the philosophical method of the *Tractatus*. Everything you might want to do with them can be done with ordinary propositions:

> We can actually do without logical propositions, for in a suitable notation we can in fact recognise the formal properties of propositions by mere inspection of the propositions themselves. (TLP 6.122)

To a certain extent logical propositions can be helpful when clarifying confusions, we can use them as elucidations by employing the 'zero method' to clarify other propositions: "the propositions of logic demonstrate the logical properties of propositions by combining them so as to form propositions that say nothing" (TLP 6.121).[59] But in fact logical propositions are not discussed in the *Tractatus* as the solution to philosophical problems. Instead they are discussed because they are the source of yet another type of philosophical problem – i.e. the confusion of logical propositions with ordinary propositions. Confusion arises if we treat a logical proposition as though it makes sense (if we think that it says something).[60] Doing so can produce a philosophical problem because we think that we have said something when in fact nothing has been said. The role of philosophy is to recognise when a particular proposition has sense or not, and this clarification

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[57] "It is possible [...] to give in advance a description of all 'true' logical propositions" (TLP 6.125). "Hence there can *never* be surprises in logic" (TLP 6.1251). "In logic process and result and equivalent. (Hence the absence of surprise.)" (TLP 6.1261).

[58] "All theories that make a proposition of logic appear to have content are false. [...] Indeed, the logical proposition acquires all the characteristics of a proposition of natural science and this is the sure sign that it has been construed wrongly" (TLP 6.111)

[59] "If propositions are to yield a tautology when they are connected in a certain way, they must have certain structural properties. So their yielding a tautology when combined *in this way* shows that they possess these structural properties" (TLP 6.12).

[60] "Even at first sight it seems scarcely credible that there should follow from one fact *p* infinitely many *others*, namely $\sim\sim p$, $\sim\sim\sim\sim p$, etc. And it is no less remarkable that the infinite number of propositions of logic (mathematics) follow from half a dozen 'primitive propositions'. But in fact all the propositions of logic say the same thing, to wit nothing" (TLP 6.43).

includes clearing up confusions when a logical proposition has been treated as though it says something.[61]

In a letter to Wittgenstein on 13th August 1919, Russell wrote: "I am convinced you are right in your main contention, that logical props are tautologies, which are not true in the sense that substantial props are true" (*Cambridge Letters* p.121). Wittgenstein replied: "I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only a corollary" (*Cambridge Letters* p.124) then explained that the main point is the say-show distinction. I take it that the issue of logical propositions is a corollary of the say-show distinction in the sense that it is one of many philosophical confusions that the say-show distinction can clarify. Logical propositions are not, however, essential to the correct method of philosophy for Wittgenstein. The method for being able to say clearly what can be said lies elsewhere – in Wittgenstein's account of elucidations.

To tell whether a proposition has sense we need to look at the place it occupies in logical space, we need to look at the internal logical relations between the proposition and all other propositions with sense. How can this be turned into a method for solving philosophical problems? The answer lies in Wittgenstein's claim that: "philosophy is not a body of doctrine, but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations" (TLP 4.112). Given my previous remarks about the say-show distinction, it might be assumed that while a proposition expresses what can be said, an elucidation expresses what can only be shown, but this is misleading. If we think that an elucidation 'shows' logic, we risk treating 'showing' as a special type of expression. It might lead us to suppose that we cannot say logic but we can show logic – where 'showing' is a type of expression that is like saying but communicates what cannot be said in a special way. A better interpretation is available if we remember that what is shown *shows itself. We* do not show logic, logic shows *itself*: "what expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language" (TLP 4.121).[62] Once we take this into account we realise that the function of an elucidation is to draw attention to what

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[61] "The mark of a logical proposition is *not* general validity" (TLP 6.1231).

shows itself. The activity of philosophy is the activity of elucidating what shows itself, by means of elucidations. What we need to do to remove philosophical confusions is to *see clearly what shows itself.* An elucidation does not have content – an elucidation does not say, show or do anything – it is a person who must do something, by using the elucidation. A person must look and see what shows itself. You cannot say to someone what shows itself, they must see it for themselves. Only by looking at what shows itself and attempting to see it clearly can the confusion be clarified.

So what is an elucidation? An elucidation is not a particular type of proposition, it is anything that is used in the activity of elucidating. The term 'elucidation' has two uses – as a noun and as a verb. An elucidation (noun) does not automatically elucidate (verb). The elucidation only elucidates when it is used. The actual elucidation (verb) of an elucidation (noun) is when a person uses it to see clearly. When this occurs, the elucidation (noun) drops away and only the elucidation (verb) remains. Or, rather, all that remains is a clear vision of what can be said and an absence of confusion. An elucidation draws attention to the internal relations between propositions with sense. Anything can be used to elucidate logical form – including pictures, gestures and arrangements of objects. A good example is a truth-table. An elucidation is any utterance that draws attention to what can only be shown. It can be a proposition with sense. It can be a proposition that is senseless. It may even be a proposition that is nonsensical, although it would be wrong to assume from TLP 6.54 that elucidations are a special type of nonsense that shows what cannot be said. Technically nonsense does not show anything, but it can be used to draw our attention to what is shown in ordinary propositions with sense. For example it is possible to put a piece of nonsense next to a proposition with sense and ask someone to look at the difference.[63] The important point is that when a nonsensical proposition helps us to see what shows itself, it is not the nonsense that does this, it is the function of the elucidation. So

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[62] "Logic is not a field in which we express what we wish with the help of signs, but rather one in which the nature of the absolutely necessary signs speaks for itself" (TLP 6.124).

[63] The *Tractatus* contains several examples: "So one cannot say, for example, 'There are objects' as one might say, 'There are books'" (TLP 4.1272) and "(It is just as nonsensical to say, 'There is only one 1', as it would be to say, '2 + 2 at 3 o'clock equals 4'.) (TLP 4.1272).

the nonsensical remarks of the *Tractatus* do not help us see clearly qua nonsense, but qua elucidations.[64] I say more about this in section 2.4.

There are remarks in the *Tractatus* that may be nonsense, remarks that may be senseless, and remarks that may have sense, but all of them are meant to be elucidations and they must not be treated as substantial claims. Elucidations are what the philosopher needs to use to help us see clearly – but it is the seeing clearly that matters, not what is used as an elucidation. When it has drawn attention to what shows itself the elucidation becomes redundant and it should not be treated as a claim of any kind. Elucidations are like the lines and brackets of a truth-table, they are helpful to see what shows itself clearly, but no-one should imagine that they say something. It is also important to appreciate that elucidations work within language, they use language to draw attention to what is shown in language (not to draw attention to what is shown outside language). What philosophers need to see clearly is what can be said – not ineffable truths that lie outside the limits of language.

To sum up, the correct method of philosophy is for a person to look at the logic of language, so that they can see clearly instances where a proposition appears to say something but in fact says nothing. The method is the activity of elucidation and the role of an elucidation is not to say something but to draw attention to what shows itself – i.e. logical form. This is why the say-show distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's philosophical method.

2.3 The outcome of a philosophical task

I now need to explain the outcome that is to be achieved by using Wittgenstein's philosophical method. By applying the method to a particular philosophical problem we can see clearly when an utterance says nothing. The temptation is to misinterpret this outcome. We might think it indicates that the problem is such a deep problem that the answer is not something that can be said. We might think that the problem is so deep that the answer can only communicated through a special type of philosophical proposition – either important nonsense, or

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[64] "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical" (TLP 6.54).

'showing'. Both of these are wrong, they lead to the idea that the answers to philosophical problems are ineffable truths. The proper outcome is that when we see clearly that the problem says nothing we realise that it is simply not a problem at all.[65] If you remain dissatisfied, if you still have a lingering feeling that there is a problem, then more clarificatory work is needed because the task has not been completed.

Wittgenstein warned that the book would show "how little is achieved when [philosophical] problems are solved" (TLP Preface p.3). He also warned of the likelihood that the correct method of philosophy "would not be satisfying to the other person" (TLP 6.53). This is because traditional philosophers expect that the outcome of a philosophical task is a true statement that can be added to a body of doctrine. Instead, we have not gained something that can be said. "Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions" (TLP 4.112). The final outcome of a philosophical task is that we see clearly what shows itself, so we can say what can be said clearly.[66] And when we say what can be said, there is nothing further to be said.[67] This means that the problem vanishes. Seeing clearly and saying only what can be said, simply *is* the absence of confusion. We do not feel the need to say anything further but we are not left contemplating ineffable truths that cannot be said.

Wittgenstein claims that philosophy is an *activity*, a philosophical work consists of *elucidations* and the result is *clarification*:

> Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.
> Philosophy is not a body of doctrine, but an activity.
> A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.
> Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather the clarification of propositions.
> Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries. (TLP 4.112)

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[65] "The deepest problems are in fact *not* problems at all" (TLP 4.003).
[66] "Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put clearly" (TLP 4.116).
[67] "[Philosophy] will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said" (TLP 4.115).

These are different, though interrelated, ideas. Philosophy is an activity but not simply the activity of creating elucidations. A philosophical work must consist of elucidations because it must encourage readers to see things clearly. The philosophical activity is attempting to see things clearly. The task is elucidation, the result is when things are seen clearly. This is important because if the end result of a philosophical task was an elucidation (e.g. a drawing or diagram) then this could be put into words. But if the end result is a way of seeing things clearly, this cannot be put into words. An elucidation can be something that is said, seeing clearly is not something that can be said. The work of philosophy is to produce elucidations but elucidations are not the end result. The end result is seeing clearly what shows itself, in other words to see clearly what it is possible to say. An elucidation can be a proposition that says something, but the use it is put to is very different if is it being treated as an elucidation rather than as a proposition. The difference between a proposition and an elucidation is that a proposition is the end result (for natural science the totality of propositions – the body of doctrine – is the end result).[68] An elucidation is not the end result – it merely draws attention to what shows itself – then the elucidation drops away when clarification has been achieved.

If my interpretation so far is correct, it throws up an important exegetical question. I need to explain why Wittgenstein himself does not strictly employ the "correct method" of philosophy in the *Tractatus*, or rather, I need to explain how he puts it into practice to a certain extent, but also tries to do something more ambitious.

2.4 The task of the *Tractatus*

The task of the *Tractatus* is not identical with the "correct method" and the outcome of the *Tractatus* is not the same as the outcome of solving a philosophical problem. The *Tractatus* does elucidate several specific philosophical problems, for example Russell's theory of types.[69] But it does not just aim to elucidate particular philosophical problems, it aims to elucidate the

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[68] "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences)" (TLP 4.11).

cardinal problem of philosophy. It tries to draw attention to the limit to the totality of what can be said, because this will also elucidate what cannot be said.[70] Drawing attention to the totality of what can be said, and therefore what cannot be said, will elucidate the form of all philosophical problems and at the same time provide the solution for all philosophical problems. The outcome of a particular philosophical task is that the problem vanishes. The outcome of the *Tractatus* is that the reader can see clearly what can be said and will thus be able to employ the correct method. The correct method will provide the final solution to all the problems of philosophy. (Although the work of elucidation will remain to be done on each particular problem.)

So, how does the *Tractatus* attempt to elucidate the totality of what can and cannot be said? We have seen that each specific philosophical task involves determining whether a particular proposition has sense. The task of the *Tractatus* is to draw the limit to the totality of propositions with sense. To see if a particular proposition has sense we look to the symbol rather than the sign by describing the values for the propositional variable, or the rule of logical syntax. To determine in one move *all* the propositions that have sense the *Tractatus* does the same thing but on a far grander scale. It presents the ultimate variable – the variable that has as its values all propositions with sense. This is the general form of a proposition. It is the rule of logical syntax, such that "every possible sense can be expressed by a symbol satisfying the description and every symbol satisfying the description can express a sense" (TLP 4.5). The general form of a proposition is $[\overline{p}, \overline{\xi}, N(\overline{\xi})]$ (TLP 6).[71] If $\overline{p}$ is the set of all elementary propositions and $\overline{\xi}$ is a selection from the set of elementary propositions, then the negation of that selection will generate further propositions. *All* propositions can be generated in this way. Thus "every proposition is a result of a successive applications to elementary propositions of the operation $N(\overline{\xi})$" (TLP 6.0001). The totality of propositions with sense is

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[69] See TLP 3.332 – 3.333.

[70] "[Philosophy] must set limits to what can be thought by working outwards through what can be thought." (TLP 4.114). "It will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said" (TLP 4.115). "It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense" (TLP Preface p.3).

equivalent to the totality of elementary propositions with all their possible combinations. The general form of a proposition elucidates the limit of what can be said, but it should not be treated as a claim that has sense. It is not a theory, it is a logical proposition, the "sole logical constant", which shows logical form, the logical form of *all* propositions with sense, but does not say anything.[72]

'What shows itself' is language taken as a whole – the whole system of internal relations.[73] Logical form is the totality of the internal relations. Objects only exist insofar as they feature in possible states of affairs, names only exist insofar as they feature in propositions, the world is the totality of facts not of things – so too, propositions only exist within logical form.[74] When a proposition says something it does so only because the whole of language is shown by the proposition. What is shown is not just the logical form of that proposition, but the logical form of the whole of language. The logical scaffolding reaches out through logical space.[75] This whole cannot be put into a single proposition – a single proposition cannot represent the whole of logical space. But the whole of logical space is shown in that there are propositions that show logical form.

The *Tractatus* attempts to elucidate the totality of propositions with sense. This totality is equivalent to the general form of a proposition. Or rather, the general form of a proposition is an elucidation for the totality of propositions with sense. The general form of a proposition shows itself in all propositions with sense. To see this simply is to see the difference between propositions which say something and those which say nothing. The *Tractatus* works outwards from within language. It needs only to elucidate what can be said, it does not have to say anything about nonsense. Nonsense does not have its own characteristics, it is

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[71] Wittgenstein claims that we might say that the General Form of a Proposition is "the sole logical constant" (TLP 5.47), it is "the description of the one and only general primitive sign in logic" (TLP 5.472).

[72] The General Form of the Proposition is "the sole logical constant" (TLP 5.47) and Wittgenstein claims "my fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives. There can be no representatives of the logic of facts" (TLP 4.0312). "All the propositions of logic say the same thing, to wit nothing" (TLP 5.43).

[73] "The totality of propositions is language" (TLP 4.001).

[74] "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (TLP 5.6). "Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits" (TLP 5.61).

[75] "The propositions of logic describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they represent it. They presuppose that names have meaning and elementary propositions sense; and that is their connection with the world" (TLP 6.124).

determined only by failing to have sense. Nonsense does not show anything. What can be said can be said and this totality is what determines nonsense. However, it is not the case that *everything* that does not say something is nonsense. It is simply the case that everything that does not say something does not say something. There are two alternatives to what can be said – nonsense and silence. If I put a book on a table, it is not usually appropriate to call it nonsense because neither is it appropriate to say that it has sense. This is because the arrangement of the book on the table is not being treated as a proposition. It is, however, possible to treat a book on a table as a propositional sign – for example it could represent "it is raining". In this case the arrangement either has sense or it is nonsense. So in order for us to call something nonsense we must be treating it as a proposition. I will now argue that if we treat the remarks in the *Tractatus* as propositions (if we think that they have sense) then they are nonsense. If we do not treat them as propositions then they are neither sense nor nonsense, they are elucidations. This is why it is important to understand the distinction between sense and nonsense in terms of the say-show distinction, rather than explain the say-show distinction in terms of a theory of sense and nonsense.

TLP 6.54 is needed because of the gap between what Wittgenstein proposes as the correct method of philosophy and what he does in the *Tractatus*.[76] I interpret TLP 6.54 in the following way. The remarks of the *Tractatus* are signs, but a sign in itself is not either sense or nonsense. We must look to the symbol, to how the signs are used with a sense. If we look at the remarks of the *Tractatus* and assume that they are propositions then most of the remarks are nonsense – we make an assumption that they have sense, but they do not have the logico-syntactic use that we imagine. We need to realise that our assumption has created our confusion – i.e. treating the remarks as propositions means that they are nonsense (nonsense is something that is treated as though it has sense when it does not). By undoing our assumption, we can instead see the remarks as elucidations. When we see them as elucidations we do not treat them as though

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[76] "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed it.) He must transcend these propositions and then he will see the world aright" (TLP 6.54).

they say anything. We look at what the propositions draw our attention to, at what shows itself, rather than what they say. If we think they say something then they are nonsense, if we look at what shows itself then they are elucidations. Seeing them as elucidations means that they cease to be nonsense (because we no longer think they say something), so they just drop away. This is how the reader of the *Tractatus* is to "throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it" (TLP 6.54).

The *Tractatus* is an elucidatory text that is designed to introduce the reader to the correct conception of philosophy and then make itself redundant. In fact if the reader could already act in the way recommended by TLP 7, then the *Tractatus* would not be necessary. Hence why it may only make sense to a person for whom it is already redundant.[77] The purpose of the book is achieved when a person understands the book, but the book must not be treated as a body of doctrine, it is "not a textbook" (TLP Preface p.3). Wittgenstein does not want the reader to think something, but to *do* something. This is how the aim of the book does coincide with the aim of philosophy. What counts as understanding the book is engaging in the activity of trying to see clearly. This is why the say-show distinction is important for how we read the *Tractatus*. The person who sees clearly will say only what can be said and then remain silent. The activity of seeing clearly is its own reward. For Wittgenstein, seeing clearly is the aim of the *Tractatus* and also the aim of philosophical activity as I now explain.

2.5 The overall aim of philosophical activity

When the reader ceases to see the remarks of the *Tractatus* as propositions and comes to see them as elucidations, they cease to be nonsense, cease to be sense. They just drop away. The reader is left not with a theory of language, but a new conception of philosophy. Only one remark remains: "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (TLP 7). One way to interpret the main point would be as follows: 'what we can say' we can say clearly and 'what we cannot say' we can only show when we are silent (we can show it only without saying anything). Indeed many commentators associate the limits of language with the

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[77] "Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it – or at least similar thoughts" (TLP Preface p.3).

limits of what can be said and claim that the silence beyond the limits of language is the realm of what can only be shown. This is a common misinterpretation. The correct view is that the limits of language are the limits of what can be said and *also* what can only be shown.[78] Saying and showing are both features of language: what is shown shows itself when we say anything – ordinary propositions with sense show that they have sense, logical propositions show that they say nothing. Silence does not involve either saying or showing. It is wrong to imagine that the silence contains something ineffable that can be shown but not said. What is shown is within the realm of language and therefore within the reach of philosophy.

This has important implications for the aim of philosophical activity. The work of philosophy takes place within language, within what is thinkable. When the work of philosophy is done, what remains is silence. Silence is required when philosophy reaches the limit of what it can say (and hence also the limit of what is shown). Silence is not a further philosophical activity, it is where philosophy stops. We must resist the temptation to think that being silent involves showing something. Nothing ineffable is shown when we are silent. When we have said what can be said clearly we can remain silent. Nothing more needs to be said and nothing further shows itself. If philosophers could recognise where to stop, there would be no philosophical problems, but the philosophical urge is precisely the urge to say things even when there is nothing to be said. This is why philosophical propositions can be characterised as nonsense, although they are not to be characterised as important nonsense – nonsense that shows something that cannot be said.

Seeing clearly involves seeing clearly the totality that is language and the world, but the vision of this totality cannot be put into words.[79] Philosophy is not the activity of showing. Philosophy is the activity of attempting to see clearly

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[78] In notes dictated to G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein described the say-show distinction as "what can be shewn by the language but not said" (*Notebooks 1914-1916* p.109). The distinction is not between what can be said in language and what can be shown outside of language, or shown by something that is not language. Language is what shows itself.

[79] "To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical" (TLP 6.45). "Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits. So we cannot say in logic, 'The world has this in it, and this, but not that'" (TLP 5.61).

what is shown in order to say only what can be said and recognise when to be silent. When the task is accomplished and you do see clearly, it is not possible to put your point of view on the world into words because this would involve saying what can only show itself. Furthermore only *you* can see what *you* see clearly.[80] That you can't put what you see into words is the other side of the coin from the point that you can't put what shows itself into words. Each person must attempt to see for themselves. Elucidations are a way of encouraging others to see for themselves what shows itself. The solution of a problem is not something that a philosopher can say or show. It is what the philosopher can *see* when they see *clearly*: "the solution of the problem of life is *seen* in the vanishing of the problem. (Is this not the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life *became clear to them* have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?)" (TLP 6.521 – my italics).

Wittgenstein elucidates the totality of what can be said and what can be shown and this totality leaves two 'others' to language – nonsense and silence. When we have reached the limit of what can be said, we have a choice and we should choose silence rather than choose nonsense. This choice is something that *we* must *do*. We can choose to make noise or choose be silent. Although nonsense is what lies beyond language and silence is what lies beyond language, talking nonsense is not the same as being silent. The difference between a philosopher who sees clearly and one who does not is a difference in whether they say anything at all, rather than a difference in the philosophical claims they make.

Philosophy is a way of seeing the totality of propositions (the totality of propositions with sense, not just the true propositions), so it is something entirely different to the natural sciences.[81] Philosophy helps to clarify our vision of the totality of propositions with sense, this is how "philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science" (TLP 4.113). Philosophy is not outside logical

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[80] This appears to be the basis of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism, although, as with the issue of ethics, this issue cannot be investigated here. "For what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but shows itself [*es zeigt sich*]. The world is *my* world: this shows itself [*es zeigt sich*] in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world" (TLP 5.62).

[81] "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)" (TLP 4.111).

form, it must work from within language. In the final section of the *Tractatus* (the 6.5s) everything that can count as a problem is either something that can be said or it is not a problem. Non-problems are dissolved by seeing clearly that they attempt to ask a question where nothing can be said. This is where we need to be silent. Philosophers have a great resistance to this idea. They assume that Wittgenstein is wrong, that there really is something that can be said. This response begs the question against Wittgenstein. He wants philosophers to let go of their assumption that something needs to be said, but philosophers use this assumption to argue that Wittgenstein is wrong. This is the main problem with critics who label Wittgenstein a quietist. They assume that there is something that needs to be said and that Wittgenstein is telling us that we cannot say it. Wittgenstein is telling us that what can be said can be said. When we have said what can be said we do not need to be quiet *about* something. We just need to be quiet.

I have attributed to Wittgenstein the idea that the ultimate aim of philosophical activity is the end of philosophical activity – the aim is silence. This position is likely to attract accusations that it is defeatist and that it belittles the role of philosophy (particularly in comparison with science). I will briefly offer a defence. There are remarks in the *Tractatus* which could be used to argue that philosophy is more important than science because the philosophical task of clarifying which propositions have sense is logically prior to the scientific task of determining which propositions are true.[82] However, I prefer to argue that Wittgenstein believed that philosophy matters in its own right. Philosophy is not less important than science, but it is different. The end result is not new information, we end up knowing only what we already knew, but the difference is that we are now able to see it clearly. Seeing clearly is its own reward. The value of each task depends upon how extensive is the particular problem – how deep the mistakes are in our thinking and how difficult it is to remove the confusion. The deeper the problem, the harder we must work before we can see clearly and the more it matters that we try to do so. Although when the problems are solved, in

one sense we see "how little is achieved", because we gain no new knowledge, in another sense the silence that is the aim of philosophy is a hugely valuable achievement.[83]

3 The say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*

I have claimed that the say-show distinction underwrites Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. By this I mean that the distinction is what we need to understand if we are to understand his conception of philosophy. In this section I summarise the role of the say-show distinction and further clarify my interpretation, including my responses to some potential objections.

The say-show distinction is the cardinal problem of philosophy. It is the general form of all philosophical problems. Philosophical problems appear to say something, but they actually say nothing.

The say-show distinction offers the final solution to all philosophical problems. If we pay attention to what shows itself then we will see whether we are saying something or uttering nonsense. We do not need special propositions to do this. What shows itself does so in ordinary propositions. We can use any type of utterance as an elucidation; all that matters is that we see clearly what shows itself.

The say-show distinction helps us to dispel philosophical problems and it helps us to avoid philosophical problems. It enables us to point out nonsense and to say clearly what can be said (avoid nonsense). In both cases the desired outcome of a task is to see clearly what shows itself.

Saying and showing are both within the totality of language. The limit of what can be said is also the limit of what shows itself. Philosophical activity takes place only within the realm of language. What can be said can be said. That the totality of language is what can be said shows itself. What lies outside language

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[82] "Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science" (TLP 4.113). "The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them" (TLP 4.111).

[83] "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is this not the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?)" (TLP 6.521).

neither says nor shows. It is nonsense or silence. The overall aim of philosophical activity is to reach silence when what can be said has been said.

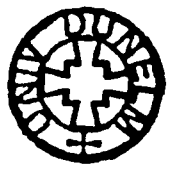
It might be objected that, in interpreting the say-show distinction as the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, I owe an explanation of what status I think this distinction has – is it an empirical doctrine? A metaphysical doctrine? A therapeutic pseudo-doctrine? If the *Tractatus* were an ordinary philosophical textbook, presenting a unified theory of language, logic and ontology, then the say-show distinction would be a doctrine about the ineffable logical relation between language and world. But the *Tractatus* "is not a textbook" (TLP Preface p.3); it does not present a theory of language and the world. It is a challenge to traditional assumptions about the aims and methods of philosophy and introduces a revolutionary conception of philosophy. The say-show distinction is bound up with the issue of language, but it is not a doctrine about language, it is a distinction for a philosophical purpose. If there were no philosophical confusions, no practice of philosophical enquiry, there would not be any need for the say-show distinction. It is not a feature of language independent of philosophy. It is not something that scientists or linguists would discover if they examined language. It is Wittgenstein's way of characterising how philosophers should see language if they are to resolve philosophical confusions. In other words it is a mistake to assume that the say-show distinction is a 'real' feature of language and the world, just as it is a mistake to assume that it gives the 'transcendental' conditions for the possibility of language. The point is that *if* we are gripped by philosophical concerns, *if* we feel the need to solve philosophical problems, *then* it will be helpful to see language in terms of the say-show distinction. If we are not troubled in this way, then we do not need to accept the say-show distinction as a theory about the relationship between language and world, as though it were a discovery similar to atomic theory or the law of gravity.

The say-show distinction is neither a doctrine nor a pseudo-doctrine, it is simply an elucidation that serves a philosophical purpose. It is used to draw our attention to what shows itself. This leaves a benign circularity in my interpretation. I accept Wittgenstein's idea that a work of philosophy offers elucidations not doctrines, which leads me to treat the say-show distinction as an

elucidation not a doctrine. The distinction then elucidates the very idea that philosophy is an elucidatory activity not a body of doctrines. However, this benign circularity is more coherent than the vicious circularity in many interpretations which criticise the *Tractatus*. They assume that philosophy offers doctrines and theories, so treat the say-show distinction as a doctrine (moreover an incoherent doctrine), then argue that the doctrine cannot support the view that a work of philosophy should consist of elucidations not doctrines.

In my interpretation, the say-show distinction is an elucidatory device that draws attention to the nature of philosophical problems and, in the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein believed that the distinction would provide "the final solution of the problems" (TLP Preface p.4). This was because elucidation (seeing clearly) makes philosophical problems disappear, so elucidating the nature of all philosophical problems will make all philosophical problems disappear. This interpretation may be misunderstood. My claim is not that the say-show distinction generates philosophical problems. I do not follow those commentators who think that Wittgenstein viewed the say-show distinction as a feature of language which generates philosophical problems, such that philosophical problems are attempt to say something that can only be shown. My interpretation is that the say-show distinction is not a feature of language, it is a feature of philosophy. It is the form that all philosophical problems take because they are all misunderstandings of language. Wittgenstein's point is that philosophical problems are attempts to say something when nothing can be said. Rather than trying to say or show something, philosophers need to see clearly what shows itself. Then they will say only what can be said and recognise when to be silent.

Several commentators have argued that there are two versions of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*, although they disagree about how these two versions should be explained.[84] The only extent to which I think there are two versions is as follows. What shows itself is the internal relations of logical form within the totality of language. In this type of showing nonsense and silence do not show anything. However, the totality of propositions with sense constitutes the limits of language, the limits of what can be said. *That* these are the limits of what



can be said shows that what lies on the other side of the limit is nonsense. So we might claim that, in the latter instance, nonsense is also shown but not said. However, nonsense does not show anything and nonsense does not show itself. The totality of language shows that nonsense is nonsense. Nonsense does not show us that it is nonsense. Moreover in the *Tractatus* itself Wittgenstein does not employ the say-show distinction (or a method of "showing") to "show" something that cannot be said, nor does he use nonsense to show something that cannot be said. His approach assumes that if we put into place everything that can be said, then this totality shows everything that can be said, and *thereby* shows what cannot be said. This may seem ambiguous so to repeat: the point is not that what cannot be said (the inexpressible) is shown. The point is that the limits of language are the limits of what is said and shown and this is what delimits the inexpressible. There is a further potential misunderstanding that I wish to avoid. I have said that the limit of what can be said is both the limit of what can be said and also the limit of what can be shown. What is shown simply *is* the totality of what can be said, everything else is nonsense or silence. This does not mean that the realm of what cannot be said is something shown. It is correct to say that "what can be said" is the same as "the sayable" which is the same as "sense". It is not correct to treat "what can be shown" as "the unsayable" and "nonsense", these notions are not equivalent.

My interpretation runs contrary to the idea that "what can be shown cannot be said" (TLP 4.1212) means that the role of science is to say what can be said and the role of philosophy is to show what can only be shown. I reject the idea that philosophical propositions do not say anything but they show ineffable truths, or the idea that philosophical propositions are nonsense, but they show what cannot be said. When we talk about the distinction between saying and showing, we should not imagine there are two activities we can do – saying and showing, such that showing is a bit like saying only a different way of expressing thoughts. There is not an activity of 'showing' that we can engage in because *we* do not show what is shown, what is shown *shows itself.* Showing is not something that *we* do. What we do is express our thoughts using language (TLP 4.121). We make

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[84] See Block (1980), Conant (2000) and Koethe (1996).

ourselves understood through propositions that say something (TLP 4.026), but what is shown expresses itself in what is said (TLP 4.124). By emphasising this point strongly I risk making it seem less credible. Of course when we employ an elucidation to draw someone's attention to what shows itself, then in a sense we are 'showing' that person something. But my concern is that used in this manner "showing" appears too similar to "saying". We might imagine that we use a proposition to say something and an elucidation to show something, so saying and showing are simply two different ways of expressing ourselves, expressing our thoughts. Wittgenstein emphasises that what is shown shows *itself* in language, it is not something that *we* show: "what expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language" (TLP 4.121).

Another problem is that the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* can lead philosophers to treat 'showing' as the really important issue – we all know what saying means, saying is the purview of science and ordinary empirical speech, so the philosophically significant issue must be 'what is shown'. It is true that Wittgenstein requires philosophers to pay attention to what shows itself, but this is only in order to gain a better understanding of 'saying' – to properly appreciate the amazing idea that what can be said can be said. My interpretation thus highlights a truism, the "unassailable" truth that Wittgenstein wants us to see clearly: what can be said can be said. This platitude is important (but shows how little is achieved by the *Tractatus*). Its purpose is to relieve the mental cramp of philosophers who are tempted to think that there are facts beyond the sayable that are unsayable. Wittgenstein reminds us that what can be said can be said clearly, but often is not said clearly. Philosophers who believe that they are struggling to express an unsayable fact, or an idea that they can think but not say, need to see their problem in a different light. They need to appreciate that they are not struggling to say something unsayable, they are failing to say clearly what can be said. The say-show distinction is, then, a philosophical truism which is that we say things in language, but if we want to see whether language says something we must look, there is not something further to say. It isn't that the silence shows us something. It is that when we see what shows itself we realise that nothing needs to be said and therefore all we need to do is be silent.

4 Summary

I have argued that the *Tractatus* offers a critique of traditional philosophy and offers an alternative account of the nature of philosophical problems and the appropriate methods for resolving them. I have also argued that the say-show distinction is the basis of this conception of philosophy. However, Wittgenstein himself claimed that the *Tractatus* contained "grave mistakes" (PI Preface p.viii). Does this mean that we should assume that the whole conception of philosophy I have just introduced is flawed? Does it mean that the *Investigations* rejects the say-show distinction? I believe not. In the next chapter I discuss the failure of the *Tractatus*, but also explain why Wittgenstein retained fundamentally the same conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*. Then, in chapter 7, I defend the view that the say-show distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*.

Chapter 6: The failure of the *Tractatus* and its legacy

Content

1 Introduction

In the preface to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein wrote: "I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in [the *Tractatus*]" (PI Preface p.viii). Wittgenstein believed that the *Tractatus* contained mistakes, but he did not consider it to be entirely worthless. In this chapter I explain why Wittgenstein considered the *Tractatus* to be a failure and discuss which aspects of the *Tractatus* he rejected. I then outline some significant aspects of the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein did not reject and suggest that the legacy of these aspects can be seen in the *Investigations*. I briefly consider what commentators have judged to be the failure of the *Tractatus*, but my main concern is to know what Wittgenstein himself judged to be the mistakes in the *Tractatus* when he wrote the *Investigations*. This is what we need to establish if we are to appreciate why he wanted the *Tractatus* to be read alongside the *Investigations*.

The most obvious problem with the *Tractatus* is that can appear to be self-referentially incoherent.[1] Many commentators have seized upon this and made it the basis of their account of why Wittgenstein later believed the *Tractatus* to be a failure, but I think this is a red herring. The apparent self-reflexive problem of the *Tractatus* is not the 'grave mistake' that Wittgenstein refers to in the *Investigations*. To gain a correct understanding of the failure of the *Tractatus*, I first describe the incoherence problem and explain why this is not the grave mistake that commentators take it to be. I then explain where the real failure of the *Tractatus* lies.

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[1] This objection can be traced back as far as Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus* where he remarks: "Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said" (TLP Introduction p.xxi).

2 The apparent failure of the *Tractatus*

Many commentators believe that the *Tractatus* was a failure because it is self-referentially incoherent. They assume that Wittgenstein either did not realise this at the time of writing the *Tractatus*, or he believed wrongly that he had managed to avoid the problem. They furthermore suppose that when he returned to philosophy he either recognised for the first time that the book was incoherent, or he realised that the strategy he had used to avoid the problem was flawed. These views are mistaken and the mistakes are significant because they involve a misinterpretation of the say-show distinction. In the first instance people often consider the say-show distinction to be the culprit for the self-referential incoherence and think that Wittgenstein just failed to recognise the problem – namely that the book *says* what cannot be said. In the second instance they suppose that Wittgenstein had recognised the problem, but thought that the say-show distinction would rescue the book from incoherence because it can *show* what cannot be said rather than say what cannot be said. In both cases philosophers assume that when he wrote the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein believed that the say-show distinction was irreparably flawed and that the *Tractatus* was thus a failure. This is how the failure of the book is typically made to rest on the failure of the say-show distinction. It also gives rise to the commonly held idea that the say-show distinction is a 'grave mistake' in the *Tractatus*.

The views described are held by commentators who read the *Tractatus* from the standpoint of traditional philosophy, those who assume that the say-show distinction is a theory or doctrine about language and world. Treated as such the distinction is clearly in tension with ideas expressed in the *Tractatus*, namely that philosophy should not consist of substantial philosophical doctrines, and so renders the book self-referentially incoherent. On this reading TLP 6.54 is interpreted as an indication that what the book appears to say cannot be said but can only be shown, which in turn explains why the book is nonsense. This has led to the idea that Wittgenstein wanted his remarks to be taken as 'important nonsense', nonsense that 'shows' ineffable truths that cannot be said. Peter Carruthers is a representative example. He rejects the stylistic demands of the *Tractatus*: "my own view is that art and philosophy ought not to be mixed"

(Carruthers 1989, xii), and makes his traditional standpoint clear: "my overall goal is truth. The doctrines of the *TLP* must therefore be assessed" (Carruthers 1989, 2). His criticism starts with the point that, according to TLP 6.54, "a piece of nonsense can show something [...] since Wittgenstein thinks that the nonsensical propositions in a philosophical work can help us to see the world aright" (Carruthers 1989, 56). He then rejects the say-show distinction using the following argument:

> Something, somewhere, has surely gone wrong with the showing/saying doctrine. [...] it must be wholly unacceptable to claim that all of philosophy is nonsense. For either a nonsensical sentence can show us something or it cannot. If it cannot, then Wittgenstein's claim at 6.54 that anyone understanding TLP would be led to see the world aright must be unfounded; indeed there can be no such subject as philosophy. But if, on the other hand, a piece of nonsense can show us something, then there must somehow be a distinction to be drawn between illuminating and unilluminating nonsense. (Carruthers 1989, 57-58)

This argument contains a series of mistakes that are characteristic of criticisms of the *Tractatus*. The mistakes are based on a misinterpretation of the say-show distinction. Carruthers thinks that TLP 6.54 indicates that the *Tractatus* consists of nonsense. He assumes that this is a consequence of the say-show distinction, as, the distinction apparently commits Wittgenstein to the view that all philosophy is nonsense, including the *Tractatus*. He imagines that Wittgenstein nonetheless thinks that nonsensical sentences 'show' something even though they do not say anything. Then, by pointing out the incoherence in this view of nonsense, believes he is entitled to reject the say-show distinction. All of the steps in this argument are wrong.

As we have seen in previous chapters, recent commentators have attempted to avoid this conclusion by taking a non-traditional approach and reading the *Tractatus* from the standpoint that the book itself recommends. Their intention is well-placed, but in practice they make a major mistake. To take seriously the idea that the book does not present doctrines, they focus on TLP 6.54 as the key to understanding Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. In doing so commentators privilege TLP 6.54 over the say-show distinction. They invoke TLP 6.54 to claim that the say-show distinction is utter nonsense that must be thrown

away. Read in this way the book is considered a success when it encourages the reader to see that the say-show distinction is a pseudo-doctrine which is utter nonsense. These commentators therefore disagree with the traditional view that Wittgenstein failed in his sincere attempt to make the *Tractatus* coherent. They suggest instead that the self-referential incoherence of the *Tractatus* was a deliberate ploy, designed to demonstrate that any such philosophical project is fundamentally flawed. If this is so, then the success of the book is made to rest on the failure of the say-show distinction. In other words, the *Tractatus* achieves its aim if the reader recognises that the say-show distinction is nonsense. Despite denying that the *Tractatus* is a failure, this interpretation shares the view held by the former group of commentators that the say-show distinction is fundamentally flawed and leads only to self-referential incoherence.[2]

The views I have described all accept that the say-show distinction is flawed. The differences between them hinge on whether they take Wittgenstein to have been aware of this flaw at the time of writing, whether he thought the flaw could be avoided, or whether he purposefully included the flawed distinction. In all cases I propose that the alleged flaw – the charge of self-referential incoherence – is the result of a mistaken understanding of the say-show distinction, combined with a mistaken understanding of how to read the book. Both the traditional and non-traditional readings have misunderstood the relationship between the say-show distinction and TLP 6.54. Both groups share the view that we should use TLP 6.54 as the key to understanding the say-show distinction, rather than the other way round. Rather than privilege TLP 6.54 as others have done, my view is that we should use the say-show distinction to understand the conception of philosophy summed up in TLP 7 and use this conception of philosophy to understand the need for TLP 6.54. This is the proper

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[2] On this type of account the say-show distinction is not a grave mistake insofar as it is incoherent. It is a mistake because it is insufficiently obvious that it is nonsense. In other words the say-show distinction fails not because it is nonsense, but because the Tractarian method of uncovering nonsense does not work. This is Conant's position: "When Wittgenstein himself criticises the *Tractatus's* mode of philosophical presentation it is not [...] on the grounds that its doctrine is flawed, but on the grounds that its *method* is flawed: it is inherently dogmatic – the work cultivates the impression that things are being dogmatically asserted" (Conant 1995, 297).

way to make an interpretation cohere with Wittgenstein's explicit statement that whole point of the book is summed up in the Preface and TLP 7.

I believe that Wittgenstein was well aware that the expression of his ideas in the *Tractatus* was problematic, but did not believe that the book was self-referentially incoherent. Or, rather, he could see that it would appear self-referentially incoherent from the perspective of traditional philosophy, but knew that if it was seen from the perspective of his alternative conception of philosophy it would work. TLP 6.54 is not required because the book is self-referentially incoherent (whether intentionally or unintentionally). It is required to prevent the book being read in a way that will make it appear self-referentially incoherent. TLP 6.54 is Wittgenstein's way of dealing with the difficulty of expressing his vision of philosophy in a book. It is an attempt to stop the reader treating the work as doctrine rather than elucidation. TLP 6.54 should not be read as saying that every remark in the book is nonsense (whether 'important nonsense' or 'utter nonsense'), it should be read as saying that every remark in the book should be taken as an elucidation rather than a proposition because if treated as propositions they are only nonsense. This is not an attempt by Wittgenstein to be cryptic, it is wholly consistent as a consequence of his view that the task of philosophy is to offer elucidations rather than propositions. When he published the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was confident that his conception of philosophy was correct, but recognised that his book might not adequately demonstrate this conception, hence his admission that in expressing his thoughts "I am conscious of falling a long way short of what is possible" (TLP Preface p.4). Although there was indeed a problem with the presentation of his ideas, the apparent incoherence is not the 'grave mistake' he mentioned in the *Investigations* because even at the time of writing the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein realised that this was a problem. If the book is read in the correct way – as elucidations not propositions – it is not self-referentially incoherent because it does not say what cannot be said, nor does it appeal to an illicit alternative form of expression – i.e. 'showing' ineffable truths. It is not an ineffable doctrine and it is not a pseudo-doctrine. It is an elucidatory device employed to introduce an elucidatory method of philosophy.

Although the style of presentation is a problem for the *Tractatus*, it is not a grave mistake. When he wrote the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein believed that the ladder device in TLP 6.54 could be employed successfully – it should be possible for the reader to treat the remarks as elucidations rather than propositions, so they would not be nonsense and could be thrown away when they had served their purpose. The measure of success for this device is whether all of the elucidations of the *Tractatus* work as elucidations. We know this because when writing the book Wittgenstein only included remarks that he considered to be elucidations. In a letter to Ogden (5th May 1922) Wittgenstein refused to allow his remaining notes to be added to the *Tractatus*:

> The supplements are exactly what must *not* be printed. Besides THEY REALLY CONTAIN NO ELUCIDATIONS AT ALL. (*Letters to C. K. Ogden*, p.46)

However, in the *Investigations* he indicates that some of the elucidations of the *Tractatus* were unsuccessful. In fact the most ambitious and important elucidation did not work – namely the general form of a proposition. From the perspective of his later work, the gesture of revocation in TLP 6.54 cannot be performed successfully. Not all the elucidations are effective, so they cannot all be entirely thrown away. This does not mean, however, that the conception of a work of philosophy as elucidation, or the activity of philosophy as seeing clearly is flawed.

I rejected the idea that Wittgenstein had reason to call the say-show distinction a 'grave mistake' due to self-referential incoherence of one form or another. But is it possible that the say-show distinction was a mistake for other reasons? I believe not. If the say-show distinction involved a theory or doctrine of language or the world, then it would be a grave mistake because Wittgenstein did later reject many Tractarian presuppositions about language. But the say-show distinction is not a theory or doctrine. Instead I demonstrated in chapter 5 that it is the basis for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. To establish that he did not believe the distinction to be a mistake, I argue in chapter 7 that the same conception of philosophy features in the *Investigations*. Once this is done it will establish beyond doubt that the say-show distinction was not one of the grave

mistakes in the *Tractatus*. Now we must consider what are the real 'grave mistakes' in the *Tractatus*.

3 The real failure of the *Tractatus*

It is wrong to think that 'grave mistakes' entail that the book fails utterly. This is something that many critics argued even before the *Investigations* was published, but it was not Wittgenstein's own assessment. His view was that the book worked, but presented a mistaken picture of language. According to Anscombe, "Wittgenstein used to say that the *Tractatus* was not *all* wrong: it was not like a bag of junk professing to be a clock, but like a clock that did not tell you the right time" (Anscombe 1959, 78). Malcolm claimed that "he told me once that he really thought that in the *Tractatus* he had provided a perfected account of a view that is the only alternative to the viewpoint of his later work" (Malcolm 1967, 69).

The grave mistakes arose because Wittgenstein failed to properly employ his own method of philosophy in the *Tractatus*, or rather, there were problems with the way he employed the method. This is not a form of self-referential incoherence – what he did was consistent with the method he had proposed, but he misjudged the outcome. The *Tractatus* is a working clock, but it tells the wrong time. As we saw in the last chapter, Wittgenstein wanted philosophers to say clearly what can be said and avoid using signs that say nothing. Philosophy should be an activity, the activity of attempting to see clearly what shows itself, rather than stating true claims. The correct method is to use elucidations rather than propositions and the required outcome of a task is to achieve clarity of what shows itself. Wittgenstein's work in the *Tractatus* was in accordance with all of these principles, yet the *Tractatus* contained grave mistakes. I argue that the grave mistakes arose because certain presuppositions insidiously distorted his work. However, the presuppositions were not intrinsic to his conception of philosophy, they were additional demands of which Wittgenstein was oblivious. It is as though Wittgenstein set the clock to the wrong time to begin with (or did not check that it was set at the right time to begin with), then wound it up and let it run. When he came to read the time from the clock it told the wrong time, but not because it was failing to work properly. I explain how this occurred by drawing on discussions in

the *Investigations* which diagnose his former presuppositions. All the remarks up to PI 143 shed light on Wittgenstein's rejection of the *Tractatus*, but, to be economical, I focus on the main points contained in PI 89 to PI 115. In particular I discuss the numerous presuppositions which combine to form the main mistake, the 'wrong time' that is on the face of the clock: namely the general form of a proposition.

When Wittgenstein employed his new philosophical method, his biggest achievement was the general form of a proposition. This is the most important elucidation in the *Tractatus*, its function is to draw attention to the totality of propositions with sense – the totality of what can be said and shown. The general form of proposition works within what can be said to draw a limit to what cannot be said. It permits the clarification of all propositions with sense and in doing so provides the final solution to the problems of philosophy. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein has his interlocutor refer to the general form of a proposition as "the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache" (PI 65). Wittgenstein responds by admitting that he no longer sees his task as "producing something in common to all that we call language" (PI 65). This was one of Wittgenstein's presuppositions in the *Tractatus* – it was the idea that there is an "essence" to all language uses, something that they have in common. In terms of the *Tractatus* this is seen in the idea that a propositional symbol is a variable and all the values of the variable have the same essence, the same logical form. The general form of a proposition is the ultimate variable – the essence of what is common to all propositions. It was the sole logical constant, the rule which laid down in advance all possible combinations of propositions with sense.

By unpacking various problems with the general form of a proposition I shall demonstrate that these were generated by Wittgenstein's requirement to *see clearly* the sense of a proposition, combined with a misunderstanding of what seeing clearly would involve. The following is a brief outline of the key issues before I discuss them individually. The general form of a proposition is based upon the assumption that the sense of a proposition is *determinate* – each proposition has one and only one *complete analysis*. The logical analysis of a propositional sign is achieved by identifying the propositional symbol – the

essence of the proposition is the variable that the proposition has in *common* with all other signs that can be employed with an identical sense, i.e. all the signs that share the same logical form. As logical form is essential and determinate it is not apparent in propositional signs (which are accidental and indeterminate) and must instead be seen as a structure that *underlies* ordinary language use – it is *hidden* but can be uncovered by logical analysis. Logical form is a single, *complete* system. Language forms a totality and all meaningful propositions are constructed according to the rules of logical syntax. The rules of logical syntax are ultimately reducible to one logical constant – the general form of a proposition – hence all language works in the *same* way. Now I shall explain why these features of the general form of a proposition arise from Wittgenstein's methodological demand for clarity.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein claimed that "philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts" (TLP 4.112). He assumed that logical clarity would reveal the exact, determinate sense of each proposition. Anything less would not count as seeing clearly the logical essence of the proposition. If a proposition has a determinate sense, then the sense must be definite.[3] An indefinite sense could not be determinate, logic cannot be vague, so it was assumed that clarifying concepts involved making them more definite, more exact.[4] In the *Investigations* he characterises the requirement for exactness as follows:

> We eliminate misunderstandings by making our expressions more exact; but now it may look as if we were moving towards a particular state, a state of complete exactness; and as if this were the real goal of our investigation. (PI 91)

This illusory state of complete exactness is precisely that offered by the general form of a proposition, and it is why the latter was seen as the ultimate aim of the *Tractatus*. Language is treated as a complete, unified system with an exact limit.[5] The general form of a proposition is the sharp boundary that exactly demarcates

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[3] "The sense of a sentence – one would like to say – may, of course leave this or that open, but the sentence must nevertheless have *a* definite sense. An indefinite sense – that would really not be a sense *at all*" (PI 99).
[4] "We want to say that there cannot be any vagueness in logic" (PI 101).
[5] "An indefinite sense – that would really not be a sense *at all*. This is like: an indefinite boundary is not really a boundary at all" (PI 99).

the limit of language, the limit between propositions which say something and those which say nothing. The idea that an exact limit of language could be elucidated was a logical extension of the principle that this could be achieved in the case of ordinary propositions. Each proposition has a complete analysis, so it seemed possible to provide a complete analysis of all propositions – indeed it was necessary to do so if complete clarity was to be achieved.[6] When he later criticised this assumption, Wittgenstein acknowledged that it is possible to give ordinary propositions a sharp boundary for particular purposes, but his mistake was to imagine that this was required for the totality of propositions.[7] His point was not that it is impossible to draw such a limit, but rather that he had misunderstood the need for such an absolute and permanent boundary.[8]

A crucial factor in Wittgenstein's employment of the general form of a proposition was his treatment of the distinction between the essential and accidental features of propositions.[9] He assumed that the apparent differences between the function of words was only superficial and accidental. Underneath, at the level of the logical symbol, all propositions with sense could be derived from the general form of a proposition. This was the guarantee that the sense of each proposition was determinate and laid down, once and for all, in advance of actual uses of language. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein criticises the idea that the uses of language are "something fixed, given once for all" (PI 23). Instead he draws attention to the many varied types of language use, without attempting to assimilate them to a single logical structure.

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[6] "It may come to look as if there were something like a final analysis of our forms of language, and so a single completely resolved form of every expression" (PI 91).

[7] "To say 'This combination of words makes no sense' excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason" (PI 499). "When a sentence is called senseless, it is not, as it were, its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation" (PI 500).

[8] "We can draw a boundary for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all! (Except for that special purpose.) No more that it took the definition 1 pace = 75 cm. to make the measure of length 'one pace' usable. And if you want to say 'But still, before that it wasn't an exact measure', then I reply: very well, it was an inexact one. – Though you still owe me a definition of exactness" (PI 69).

[9] "But how can I decide what is an essential, and what an inessential, accidental, feature of the notation? Is there some reality lying being the notation which shapes its grammar?" (PI 562).

> It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. (PI 23)

The distinction between the appearance of a sign and its actual sense had led him to imagine that language all works one way. If the essential sense of a proposition is what it looks like underneath, rather than its accidental features, then the surface differences between propositions are insignificant. He was not interested in the differences between uses of language, only what they have in common – all propositions that have the same sense have the same logical variable. Language is a totality, a complete system, so all possible propositions are generated through the rules of that single system. The general form of a proposition is the variable that all propositions with sense have in common. It is the logical essence hidden under the surface of all propositions.[10]

Ordinary propositions did not clearly reveal their logical sense.[11] Instead the sense must be clarified, which meant it must be revealed and uncovered by logical analysis.[12] This gave rise to the idea that the sense was an underlying structure, hidden behind the confusion of ordinary propositional signs: "we are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language" (PI 97).[13] The sense, the essence of a proposition seems to be "something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look *into* the thing, and which an analysis digs out" (PI 92). Once it was accepted that logical analysis could uncover the pure, perfect necessary structure of logic underneath the confused and vague appearance of language, it implied that that the method of enquiry was extremely powerful and this illusion led to further mistakes:

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[10] "'*The essence is hidden from us*': this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask '*What is* language?', '*What is* a proposition?' And the answer to these questions is to be given once and for all; and independently of any future experience" (PI 92).

[11] "Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it" (TLP 4.002).

[12] "Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries" (TLP 4.112).

[13] "The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background – hidden in the medium of the understanding" (PI 102).

> Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here. Thought, language, now appear to us as the unique, correlate, picture of the world. These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line behind the other, each equivalent to each. (PI 96)

Not only would the elucidation of logical form make clear the essential structure of language, it would also elucidate the logical form of thought and the world. The demand that sense be determinate was equated with the demand that objects be simple.[14] This was not a metaphysical doctrine about the world, but a failed elucidation of what would count as an object, given the structure of language. The picture of the world as the totality of facts was an elucidation rather than a theory, but nonetheless it was an overly demanding picture. The ideal of simple, pure units of sense is rejected in the *Investigations*.[15] Having shown that the notion of a simple element is meaningless in most contexts, he concedes that it is "impossible to give an account of any primary element"(PI 46) he admits that "my objects (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary elements" (PI 46).

According to the conception of philosophy I presented in the last chapter, one of Wittgenstein's key proposals was that philosophical problems were not to be solved with facts or empirical discoveries. To avoid any risk of empirical contingency or indeterminacy Wittgenstein had made an extreme contrast between logical analysis and empirical enquiry:

> [Logic] must be *utterly simple*. It is *prior* to all experience, must run through all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it. – It must rather be of the purest crystal. (PI 97)

This extreme misconception was in fact "a tendency to sublime the logic of language" (PI 38). Wittgenstein calls the subliming of logic a "tendency to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts" (PI 94). He

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[14] "The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate" (TLP 3.23). "The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign" (TLP 3.21).

[15] "'A *name* signifies only what is an *element* of reality. What cannot be destroyed; what remains the same in all changes.' – But what is that? – Why, it swam before our minds as we said the sentence! This was the very expression of a quite particular image: of a particular picture which we want to use. For certainly experience does not show us these elements" (PI 59).

previously thought that logic lay beneath the surface of ordinary language and empirical facts:

> There seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth – a universal significance. Logic lay, it seemed at the bottom of all the sciences. – For logical investigation explores the nature of all things. It seeks to see to the bottom of things and is not meant to concern itself whether what happens is this or that. (PI 89)

He describes this as a temptation that must be avoided, it is the "urge to understand the basis, or essence of everything empirical" (PI 89). He gives a specific reference to TLP 5.563 when he describes the mistaken view that logic presents "the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of *possibilities*, which must be common to both world and thought" (PI 97).

It is important to recognise that this idealised view of logic was produced by Wittgenstein's methodological demands in the *Tractatus*: "(For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement)" (PI 107). Crystalline purity is the ideal that results from a demand for absolute clarity. Wittgenstein's fundamental mistake in the *Tractatus* was to assume that if we are to see absolutely clearly then what we see must be absolutely clear, precise, exact and perfect.[16] Anything less would not meet the requirement for complete clarity.[17] He failed to consider the possibility that when we achieve a clarified vision of what shows itself, the uses of language that we see clearly may be indistinct, vague and lacking an essential logical structure. The preconception about clarity and the emergence of the general form of a proposition are different mistakes – but mutually reinforcing. The requirement for a certain type of clarity is a frame through which Wittgenstein viewed language, the general form of the proposition is what Wittgenstein saw when he looked through this frame and it fitted his requirement so perfectly that it seemed to confirm the success of the approach. He quotes a remark from the *Tractatus* "the general form of a proposition is: "this is how things stand" (TLP 4.5) as though it is the voice of his

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[16] "Men have always had a presentiment that there must be a realm in which the answers to questions are symmetrically combined – a priori – to form a self-contained system. A realm subject to the law: Simplex sigillum veri" (TLP 5.4541).

[17] "I feel as though, if only I could fix my gaze absolutely sharply on this fact, get it in focus, I must grasp the essence of the matter" (PI 113).

interlocutor, who is expressing a particularly tempting misunderstanding. He comments: "that is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times" (PI 114). In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein sums up the long series of remarks on the general form of a proposition with the following remark: "a *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (PI 115). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein thought his elucidations would draw our attention to the underlying logic that we usually fail to see. However he was in the grip of a picture.[18] He projected the assumptions of the picture onto language and thought he was seeing clearly the logical form that showed itself, when instead what he saw was imposed by the frame of logical analysis.[19] In the *Investigations* he realised that the task is not to uncover a hidden structure, we just need to see our ordinary language use clearly.

Wittgenstein thought his elucidations in the *Tractatus* enabled him to see clearly what shows itself, but instead he only saw the aspects of language which matched his standard of clarity.[20] In other words, when Wittgenstein attempted to employ his method of doing philosophy, he failed to take into account the extent to which he was working within a traditional picture of language. These ideas were so much a part of his thinking that when he tried to employ his new method, his view was distorted. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein made it known that his investigation had to work from within language, but he had perhaps been too immersed in philosophical language – the language of logicians.[21] He did not propose to construct an ideal language to replace ordinary language, as Russell and others imagined, but he did believe that the logic underlying ordinary language would show itself as a pure, perfect system.[22] Achieving clarity would

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[18] "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (PI 115).

[19] "One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it" (PI 114).

[20] "A picture is conjured up which seems to fix the sense *unambiguously*. The actual use, compared with that suggested by the picture, seems like something muddied" (PI 426).

[21] Many of Wittgenstein's preconceptions about language can probably be traced to Frege and Russell, particularly the requirement that sense is determinate. However it is not the task of this thesis to explore these historical influences.

[22] "The most that can be said is that we *construct* ideal languages. But here the word 'ideal' is apt to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday

simply be to have an unhindered vision of this pure, perfect system. The source of Wittgenstein's confused ideas about language were superficial similarities between certain forms of expression in ordinary language and the possibility of comparing one form of expression with another.[23] As language could be compared to a pure logical model, Wittgenstein was lured into thinking that it really was logical – underneath: "in philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such game" (PI 81).[24]

Many critics claim that Wittgenstein lapsed into incoherence because he "said what can only be shown" in the *Tractatus*. To put it this way is misleading. He did not say what can only be shown, because this *cannot* be said! Rather, he was guilty of presenting assumptions that in the end looked as though they said something but they said nothing. Even though, in the *Investigations,* he rejected his previous assumptions, this was not because he believed he had stated illegitimate doctrines in the *Tractatus*. Instead, he believed his mistake was to constrain in advance what would count as something that shows itself but cannot be said. He restricted 'what shows itself' to the systematic internal relations of logic, all of which could be elucidated by the general form of a proposition. His elucidations in the *Tractatus* were not meant to be taken as a theory or true claims, but some of his elucidations were not genuinely elucidatory because they engendered further confusions. These were confusions that he himself did not see clearly until later. The problem with the main elucidation was that it was too limited. He thought it could be used to elucidate the whole of language – but it only elucidated a part. The failure of the *Tractatus* is thus like the failure of Augustine's picture of language discussed in the opening section of the *Investigations*. Augustine is not completely wrong – but his account of language does not achieve what it purports to have achieved. It purports to apply to the

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language; and as if it took the logician to show people at last what a proper sentence looked like" (PI 81)

[23] "We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality" (PI 104).

[24] "It will then become clear what can lead us (and did lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and means or understands it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules" (PI 81).

whole of language, but actually only describes a limited range of language uses. In one sense Augustine's view is correct – if treated as a picture of those specific cases.

> Augustine, we might say, does describe a system of communication; only not everything we call language is this system. And one has to say this in many cases where the question arises "Is this an appropriate description or not?" The answer is: "Yes it is appropriate, but only for this narrowly circumscribed region, not for the whole of what you were claiming to describe. (PI 3)

Similarly the *Tractatus* purports to have elucidated the totality of propositions with sense, but only succeeds in elucidating a limited range of cases. The *Tractatus* is a failure if this picture is treated as a picture of the whole of language, particularly as doing so gives rise to further confusions. However, if it is treated as one elucidation among many and as applying only to certain limited cases, then it does serve a purpose. If we only use limited elucidations then it makes it appear that the whole of language must fit the elucidation. This ruins the whole point of looking to see what shows itself: "we are dazzled by the ideal and therefore fail to see the actual use of the word [...] clearly" (PI 100). In effect we think that we are seeing what shows itself, but we only use an elucidation that reveals a fraction of what shows itself and fail to notice the rest. We then assume that we are able to see clearly the whole of what shows itself. This is not a failure with the method, but with an overly limited application of the method. The say-show distinction is not a grave mistake in the *Tractatus*, but Wittgenstein made grave mistakes when he failed to properly implement the say-show distinction.

4 The legacy of the *Tractatus*

It is widely accepted by philosophers that there are numerous points of continuity between the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*; indeed there are several themes which are said to persist throughout Wittgenstein's entire career. In this section I demonstrate that we should use the say-show distinction to identify the significant continuities and to understand why he retained and developed those Tractarian themes in the *Investigations*. Some of these successor notions are straightforwardly continuities between the two texts, some are developments and

modifications, but all are products of Wittgenstein's ongoing commitment to the say-show distinction.

In the *Tractatus* logic is autonomous. It is independent of any empirical facts: "logic must look after itself" (TLP 5.473).[25] It does not make any sense to interfere with logic or try to make discoveries about logic because it could not be otherwise. Whatever could be otherwise is something that can be said. Hence the autonomy of logic is crucial to the idea that logic is what shows itself in language but cannot be said. The successor notion to logic in the *Investigations* is Grammar. Grammar is autonomous, it takes care of itself. Grammar shows itself in language but it makes no sense to say things about it. It is not possible to interfere with it or make discoveries about it, philosophers can only pay attention to it and attempt to see it clearly.[26]

In the *Tractatus* there is a distinction between logical propositions and ordinary propositions. Logical propositions show logical form but say nothing, they can only be used to draw attention to what shows itself. These are contrasted with ordinary propositions which show logic but also say something. The successor notion to this distinction in the *Investigations* is between empirical propositions and grammatical propositions.[27] Empirical propositions say what can be said, they have sense and so can be either true or false. These propositions also show grammar if we pay attention to the grammar that shows itself in their use. Grammatical propositions do not say something, they only show grammar – the grammar that is exhibited in ordinary propositions. It is not appropriate to treat grammatical propositions as if they are true, although they may have appearance of necessary truths. It makes no sense to treat these as saying something as their role is to be a reminder of the grammar, to draw attention to what shows itself. They are not meant to be treated as saying something informative or revealing a

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[25] "Hence there can *never* be surprises in logic" (TLP 6.1251).

[26] "Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs" (PI 496).

[27] See PI 251: "these words are a defence against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one". Also: "'I know ... only from my own case' – what kind of proposition is this meant to be at all? An experiential one? No. – A grammatical one?" (PI 295).

discovery.[28] There is a big difference between logical propositions in the *Tractatus* and grammatical propositions in the *Investigations* because the former are treated as logical tautologies and the latter are treated as grammatical rules. However this difference is a reflection of the more central shift from logic to grammar. The crucial point is that in both cases Wittgenstein proposes that logic/grammar shows itself in ordinary language use, but in addition to ordinary empirical propositions there are forms of language use which say nothing, but only serve to draw attention to the logic/grammar that is shown in ordinary language use.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein establishes an important distinction between the task of philosophy and that of natural science. The task of natural science is to discover truths, which involves stating empirical propositions. To say that the task of philosophy is different does not mean that it involves stating philosophical propositions. Instead the philosophical task is to pay attention to what shows itself and cannot be said, rather than try to say something true. If the task involved constructing propositions that appear to say something about what shows itself then these are either senseless logical propositions, in which case they merely show what is already shown in ordinary propositions, or they are nonsensical pseudo-propositions which appear to say something but in fact say and show nothing. The successor notion to this in the *Investigations* is also a distinction between philosophy and science.[29] Once again the task of science is to utter true empirical propositions – hypotheses, discoveries and theories. The task of philosophy is not to interfere and change things, or state true propositions and give explanations.[30] The task of philosophy is to draw attention to the grammar that shows itself in our ordinary language use. This does not mean that it should simply state grammatical propositions, because grammar shows itself in ordinary propositions, which are what we actually need to clarify. Just as logical propositions can be useful in drawing attention to grammar, grammatical propositions can do the same so long as they are recognised as such. It is just

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[28] See PI 392: "the analysis oscillates between natural science and grammar".
[29] See PI 109: "It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones".

important not to treat them as saying something because to do so causes confusion and disguised nonsense.

In the *Tractatus* the task of philosophy is to give elucidations not propositions. The successor notion to this in the *Investigations* is that the task of philosophy is to give descriptions and reminders rather than explanations and philosophical propositions.[31] In the *Tractatus* the purpose of giving elucidations is to draw attention to what shows itself – logic – so that we can see it clearly. As we have seen, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein misconceived what it is to see something clearly, however in the *Investigations* he retains the same point – that the role of grammatical reminders is to draw attention to what shows itself – grammar – so that we can see it clearly. In both cases philosophy is to be seen as an activity, rather than a body of doctrine. The aim in both cases is to produce clarity, but in the *Investigations* it is a different notion of clarity – not the absolute, pure clarity required in the *Tractatus*.

In the *Tractatus* the point of seeing clearly what shows itself is that it would remove confusions and this would make philosophical problems dissolve. In the *Investigations* we see exactly the same point, that philosophical problems are not solved by new information, but dissolved by seeing clearly the grammar of ordinary language.[32] In both cases Wittgenstein holds the view that philosophical problems arise from confusions between the appearance of language and the actual logic or grammar.[33] Clarity makes the problems disappear.[34] The absence of confusion simply is the absence of a philosophical problem. Clarity, seeing clearly logic or grammar, is an end in itself. It is not a further theory or truth that contributes to our knowledge. In the *Tractatus* the aim of philosophy is not to produce a body of doctrine and the same applies in the *Investigations*. The overall aim of philosophy in the *Tractatus* was silence. The successor notion to this in the

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[30] "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it" (PI 124) and "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything" (PI 126).
[31] Ibid.
[32] "These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language" (PI 109).
[33] See PI 422, PI 520 and PI 664.
[34] "For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (PI 133).

Investigations is peace.[35] When everything that can be said is said clearly then there is nothing further to be said.[36]

In the *Tractatus* there is a single correct method for establishing whether a proposition says something. It is to analyse logical form, to identify the propositional symbol, the underlying variable. It is possible to have a single correct method, because all propositions with sense have the same essence – the general form of a proposition. In the *Investigations* there is not one *single* correct method for establishing whether a proposition says something, because it is not assumed that all propositions have the same grammatical essence.[37] However the many different methods can still be seen as successor notions to the method employed in the *Tractatus*.[38] Just as the general form of a proposition was meant to elucidate logical form, language games are used to elucidate grammar. The difference is that the general form of a proposition attempted to elucidate the totality of propositions with sense, whereas individual language games, and other methods, only attempt to elucidate smaller regions of grammar. The successor notion to logical analysis in the *Tractatus* is grammatical investigation in the *Investigations*.[39]

In both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* Wittgenstein wishes to prevent readers from treating elucidations and language-games as theoretical devices. In the *Tractatus* the problem was that his use of single picture – the general form of a proposition – led him to project that picture as the underlying structure of language. In the *Investigations* he recommends that we do not just rely on a single picture, but work with many pictures, so that we do not become fixated with any one way of looking at language.[40] In the *Tractatus* the remarks of the book were

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[35] "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* into question" (PI 133).

[36] "Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal that you will not say)" (PI 79).

[37] "What is essential [...], however, was not hidden beneath the surface of this case, but this 'surface' was one case out of the family of cases" (PI 164).

[38] "There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (PI 133).

[39] "Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one" (PI 90).

[40] "For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison – as, so to speak, a measuring rod; not as a preconceived idea to

constructed in such a way that it reflected the methodological principle of logical analysis. All the remarks were ordered in a single framework of logical space. Although the *Investigations* is constructed in a very different way, it remains the case that the presentation reflects the method. In the *Investigations* grammatical remarks are a reflection of grammatical investigation. The important thing is that the unusual presentation is not a cryptic hermeneutic challenge. It is an indication that in both cases Wittgenstein believed it was necessary for his texts to have a physiognomy that reflects their methods.

The view I have presented in this chapter enables us to understand why Wittgenstein claimed that the *Investigations* could be understood in the right light only against the background of his old way of thinking in the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* was not an entirely different philosophical approach, it was fundamentally the same approach but wrongly executed and the mistakes are illuminating. However, it is important to see these mistakes in the right way. If we imagine that Wittgenstein's point in the *Investigations* is to expose the general form of a proposition as an incorrect theory, then we effectively retain the assumption that there could be a something that would count as a correct theory. We imagine that it is possible and even desirable to replace the false doctrine with a true doctrine. For example: to replace the general form of a proposition with a 'family resemblance' theory of propositions. This is precisely the assumption that we must dispel if we are to properly understand his conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*. The general form of a proposition must not be seen as a false doctrine, it must be seen as a confusion arising through various philosophical misunderstandings of our ordinary language. The general form of a proposition is the culmination of various philosophical temptations, which held Wittgenstein captive in the *Tractatus*. These temptations are difficult to overcome and they even re-emerge in the idea that the general form of a proposition needs to be disproved or refuted. To properly introduce his non-traditional conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* it is necessary for Wittgenstein to help his reader see that philosophical confusions must be clarified by seeing clearly what shows

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which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)" (PI 131).

itself. Confusions and temptations must be made to disappear, without refuting the 'theories' with new evidence. By demonstrating how these mistakes infected his work in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein hopes to encourage vigilance in philosophers who wish to learn his way of doing philosophy. Wittgenstein does not draw attention to the *Tractatus* to condemn the failings of an old philosophical approach that he has since rejected. He draws attention to the *Tractatus* because it serves as a vivid reminder of a certain types of mistake that it is easy to slip into when attempting to implement his *present* conception of philosophy – the conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*. Thus we can properly understand why Wittgenstein wanted the *Investigations* to be read alongside the *Tractatus* if we recognise that they share the *same* conception of philosophy.

5 Summary

My conclusion about the real failure of the *Tractatus* is supported by two lines of argument. In this chapter I have argued that the grave mistakes of the *Tractatus* were caused by Wittgenstein's failure to work through properly his conception of philosophy. In the next chapter I argue that the *Investigations* endorses the same conception of philosophy, but properly worked through. So, on the one hand I have argued that we need to use the say-show distinction to identify the genuine grave mistakes in the *Tractatus* and, on the other hand I next argue that Wittgenstein continued to base his conception of philosophy on the say-show distinction. Both lines of argument indicate that the say-show distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.

If we treat the say-show distinction as the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy then it helps us to appreciate why clarity – seeing clearly what shows itself – is so crucial to his whole project. Furthermore, by focussing on the issue of clarity we are able to see the real significance of the relation between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. If we treat the say-show distinction as the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy then we find that the philosophical task is not to say something true, but to attempt to see clearly what shows itself. The demand for clarity – seeing clearly what shows

itself – is of the utmost value for Wittgenstein. In both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations,* clarity is an end in itself, it determines the outcome of each philosophical task and the overall end goal of philosophy. However, although in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* clarity means seeing clearly what shows itself, they are committed to radically different conceptions of clarity. In the *Tractatus* he believed that when we see clearly what shows itself, what we see will be determinate, exact and complete. In the *Investigations* he realised that when we see clearly what shows itself we cannot specify in advance whether what we see may be determinate or vague, exact or inexact and complete or incomplete. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein was in the grip of a particular picture of clarity, in the *Investigations* he let go of this picture but retained his commitment to a revised conception of clarity. This is why the notion of clarity, understood in terms of the say-show distinction, enables us to see the real similarities and differences between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.[41]

The requirement for absolute clarity is what led Wittgenstein to use the general form of a proposition as the primary elucidation in the *Tractatus*. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein recognised that he had misjudged the requirement for clarity and misconstrued the significance of the general form of a proposition. These were his grave mistakes. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein continued to believe that the aim of philosophy was to see clearly what shows itself but the need for clarity was conceived of in very different terms. In the following chapter I demonstrate that this conception of philosophy can still be summed up as "what can be said at all can be said clearly and we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" and that the basis for this conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* is still the say-show distinction.

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[41] I defend and develop this conclusion in a paper called "Clarity in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*", to be presented at the Irish Philosophical Club Conference in February 2003.

Chapter 7: The say-show distinction in the *Investigations*

Content

1 Introduction

In this chapter I present my interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*.[1] I argue that Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* is fundamentally the same as his conception in the *Tractatus* and that in the *Investigations*, as in the *Tractatus*, the say-show distinction is the basis for his conception of philosophy.

The *Investigations* has two sections, the latter in an unrevised state. There is disagreement amongst commentators about whether the material from part two should be treated as part of the whole. The preface to the *Investigations* was written in January 1945, at which time the *Investigations* consisted only of part one. According to the Editor's note, part two was written between 1947 and 1949. When the preface asks for the *Investigations* to be read alongside the *Tractatus* it thus refers in the first instance only to part one. Although I do not have any objection to reading both parts alongside the *Tractatus*, for my purposes it is not necessary to consider part two when attempting to understand why Wittgenstein made his suggestion in the preface.

2 Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*

I suggest that we can only achieve a proper understanding of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* if we understand his conception of philosophy and we can only

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[1] I have provided full or partial quotes in the footnotes, rather than just references to proposition numbers. This is to assist the reader, where needed, in following the exegesis.

achieve a proper understanding of his conception of philosophy if we interpret it in terms of the say-show distinction. In Chapter 6 I presented an interpretation of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* which does not treat it as either a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine. On my account, the say-show distinction does not involve a theory of language, mind, world, or epistemology. Instead the phrase "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said" (TLP 4.1212) is the basis of the methodological principle for philosophy summed up in the Preface and TLP 7.[2] The methodological principle can be paraphrased as 'don't try to say something, pay attention to what shows itself' and is closely echoed in the *Investigations* as the instruction "Don't think, but look!" (PI 66). However, my interpretation does not rest on isolated remarks in the *Investigations* that may or may not refer back to the say-show distinction. Instead it rests on an overview of his conception of philosophy. In what follows I outline Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, as presented in the *Investigations,* by describing his account of philosophical problems, the various methods of philosophy, the outcome of a philosophical task and the ultimate aim of philosophical activity. In the process I establish that the Tractarian say-show distinction, properly understood, is the basis for understanding all of these. I also discuss the relation between the conception of philosophy introduced by the *Investigations* and the task and presentation of the *Investigations* itself.

Wittgenstein's most explicit remarks about his conception of philosophy appear in the section PI 89-142. I claimed in Chapter 6 that most of these remarks are criticisms of the 'grave mistakes' in the *Tractatus*, however a few indicate Tractarian views that he continued to hold and others reveal the developments in his later approach. The remarks which specifically describe his view of philosophy in *Investigations* are PI 116-133. In particular PI 109 is one of the clearest statements of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* and it is significant that this remark starts with a backward look of approval towards the Tractarian view of philosophical problems.

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[2] "What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (TLP Preface p.3). "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (TLP 7).

2.1 Philosophical problems

In PI 109 Wittgenstein confirms that he had been correct in the *Tractatus* to claim that the problems of philosophy are different to the problems of natural science.

> It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically 'that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such' whatever that may mean. (PI 109)

As in the *Tractatus*, empirical problems are solved by discovering facts that we did not previously know. These facts are presented as informative statements that are true but may be false. Philosophical problems are different, but not because they are solved by discovering non-empirical facts, or stating philosophical truths. Instead philosophical problems involve misunderstandings or confusions, rather than a knowledge deficit.

The difference between these two types of problems is significant because it is not always apparent whether the utterances we are confronted with present a genuine empirical problem or a philosophical confusion. If we can determine that a particular question is meaningful, and establish that it can be answered by meaningful statements, then we can judge that it is a problem of natural science. The task of natural science is then to find the true facts that will solve the problem. If, upon closer inspection, an utterance which appears to be a meaningful question is recognised as failing to make sense, then we at the same time recognise that there is nothing that would count as a meaningful answer.[3] Hence the task of philosophy is not to provide solutions to problems, but to recognise cases when nothing is being said and hence realise that nothing further needs to be said. Seeing clearly that the apparent problem is not a problem is how philosophy can make its confusions disappear.

In the *Tractatus,* philosophical confusions were caused by misunderstanding the logic of language. In the *Investigations* confusions are

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[3] "Well, your very questions were framed in this language; they had to be expressed in this language, if there was anything to ask!" (PI 120).

caused by misunderstanding the grammar of language.[4] Philosophical problems are not a failure to know something, they are a failure to understand what we already know. They are a failure to see clearly whether we are saying something, or merely using words that appear to say something:

> A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. (PI 122)

The grammar of our language is something that we already know, insofar as we are able to use language.[5] The crucial issue is that, although we use language, we do not always see our language use clearly: "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from the other side and no longer know your way about" (PI 203). This is why Wittgenstein characterises philosophical confusions by saying that "a philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (PI 123). As in the *Tractatus*, many philosophical confusions arise because the superficial appearance of language does not give an immediate, clear view of the actual working of the language:

> What confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their *application* is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy! (PI 11)[6]

We cannot tell simply from the appearance of language whether the utterance says something or says nothing, as the 'surface grammar' may be different to the 'depth grammar'.[7] To be able to tell whether an utterance is meaningful we need to see clearly the application of the words, rather than just the superficial

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[4] "'Language (or thought) is something unique'. – This proves to be a superstition, (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions. And now the impressiveness retreats to these illusions, to the problems" (PI 110).

[5] "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (PI 199). "How do I know that this colour is red? – It would be an answer to say: 'I have learnt English'" (PI 381).

[6] See TLP 4.002.

[7] "Now compare the depth grammar, say of the word 'to mean', with what its surface grammar would lead us to expect. No wonder we find it difficult to find our way about" (PI 664).

appearance. This is because, as in the *Tractatus*, philosophical problems are not genuine problems. They are simply illusions of problems and when the illusion vanishes so too will the problem. The illusion will vanish if we see clearly that nothing is being said.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein discussed various examples of philosophical problems, but in one sense they were all fundamentally the same problem, which is why his method could offer the final solution to all the problems. In every case the confusion occurs when an utterance appears to say something at the level of the propositional sign, but fails to do so at the level of the propositional symbol. Logical analysis was supposed to enable us to see clearly the determinate sense, or lack of sense and remove the confusion. This view of philosophical problems is too restrictive – it relies on the mistaken idea that the underlying logical form of language is a complete, determinate structure that can be revealed through analysis. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein still believes that philosophical problems are confusions that occur when we fail to see clearly the grammar of language, but there are unlimited varieties of philosophical problems because grammar is not a complete, unified system. Wittgenstein considers it unhelpful to see grammar as a single system which forms a perfectly determinate totality. Instead it is useful to see it as a criss-crossing of many different types of language use, with many regions of language that are separate from other regions, or connected in various complex ways. Wittgenstein uses the term 'language-game' to elucidate the difference between regions of language, though it is important not to take this as a theoretical claim, as though he is claiming that there are subsystems of language. It is simply helpful to see grammar in terms of a family of overlapping language-games because this lets us appreciate that different confusions arise in and between different areas of language use. This is why philosophical confusions take many different forms and why Wittgenstein does not rigidly categorise the essence of philosophical problems: instead he gives a wide variety of examples.[8] His aim is to teach us to recognise new variants of philosophical problems. For the purposes of interpretation I do not discuss his

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[8] "We now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem" (PI 133).

examples specifically, but describe them in outline and explain why I think it is helpful to understand them in terms of the say-show distinction.

When we are doing philosophy we typically try to provide explanations for the phenomena that concern us. In doing so we form what Wittgenstein calls 'pictures' – these are models which we use to make sense of the object of study. Rules and definitions are also pictures. Often we take a picture from one area of language and use it to understand something in a similar, yet different, area of language. The problem is that we fail to treat these pictures simply as objects of comparison and instead project features of the picture onto the object of study. We think that we have discovered explanations for the phenomena, but we are led astray by the picture, rather than seeing clearly what shows itself.[9] When we talk about a particular expression in language we are misled by comparisons with other areas of language.[10] Often confusion arises when words are used outside the language-game that is their home. "Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday" (PI 38).[11] One of the reasons why we are led into this confusion is because we are tempted to think that all language works one way and forms a complete system (PI 27).[12] Instead Wittgenstein asks us to be aware that specific language uses have a home in a limited region of the overall phenomenon we call language. We should not assume that because an expression says something in one context it is meaningful in all contexts. To tell whether an expression is meaningful it is not sufficient to establish that it is meaningful in one context. We need to look to see whether it is meaningful in the actual context that it is being employed.[13]

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[9] "The impression that we wanted to deny something arises from our setting our faces against the picture of the 'inner process'. What we deny is that the picture of the inner process gives us the correct idea of the use of the word 'to remember'. We say that this picture with its ramifications stands in the way of our seeing the use of the word as it is" (PI 305).

[10] "Even if such an explanation rather tempts us, we need only think for a minute of what actually happens in order to see that we are going astray here. We say that we use the command in contrast with other sentences because *our language* contains the possibility of those other sentences" (PI 20).

[11] An example is discussed in PI 47.

[12] "The paradox disappears when we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts – which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please" (PI 304).

[13] "There is a picture in the foreground, but the sense lies far in the background; that is, the application of the picture is not easy to survey" (PI 422).

Another type of problem arises because philosophers want to state claims that are exact and comprehensive – to talk about the essence of phenomena rather than accidental or irrelevant features. Wittgenstein encourages us to consider that when we state general claims we often assimilate the surface descriptions of the language use and think this reveals that the language uses are actually similar.[14] There is a temptation to think that reducing language uses to a common form of expression reveals the underlying essence of the concept – to the logical symbol that all the terms have in common. Instead Wittgenstein asks his reader to stop thinking about the appearance of language, stop assuming that we know what a term says, and instead look and attempt to see clearly the application of the words in various contexts of use. Wittgenstein's diagnosis of this type of mistake is that when we do traditional philosophy we are sometimes tempted to substitute one form of language for another because the expressions have a similar appearance.[15] Sometimes in the name of clarifying concepts we highlight similarities between the surface appearances of language utterances and assume that this reveals that the grammar of the language is also the same. One of the reasons that we make this kind of mistake is through a failure to appreciate the multiplicity of language (PI 24). In philosophy we use an impoverished set of examples. We suffer from a diet of only one type of example.[16]

From the perspective of traditional philosophy, if we accept that philosophical problems are confusions caused by a failure to properly understand the grammar of language, then it seems obvious that the task of philosophy is to explain the grammar properly – to state rules and definitions that will clarify the confusions. According to Wittgenstein, this is precisely the mistake that lies at the heart of philosophical confusions. It is also where we can acknowledge the central importance of the say-show distinction in his account. Like logic in the *Tractatus*, grammar shows itself; and what *can* be shown *cannot* be said. Traditional

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[14] "But assimilating the descriptions of uses of words in this way cannot make the uses themselves any more like one another. For, as we see, they are absolutely unalike" (PI 10). See also PI 22 and PI 24.

[15] Philosophical problems are misunderstandings, "misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language" (PI 90).

[16] "A main cause of philosophical disease – a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (PI 593).

philosophy attempts to *say* whether particular utterances are meaningful – for example by presenting a theory of language and testing the utterance in accordance with the criteria of that theory. A theory of this sort effectively devises a rule that fits the specific language use in question, then concludes that *the correct rule* has been discovered, rather than realising that many different rules could equally apply.[17] According to Wittgenstein, we lay down rules when we are doing philosophy, but get entangled in the rules because we treat the rule as a true claim, we assume that it says something meaningful.[18] Then the rule obscures our view of the language use – we no longer look at the language, we look at the rule.[19] Wittgenstein's point is that rules can be useful, they can help to clear up confusions, but only if treated as a description used to draw attention to grammar – to help us see what shows itself. If treated as a once-and-for-all explanation of the grammar, they appear to say something, but in fact are meaningless. Even if a rule is meaningful in one context, this does not mean that it is meaningful as an explanation that applies to the whole of language. Philosophers fail to realise this and are tempted to think that definitions apply comprehensively, rather than recognising that they apply for a particular purpose and to a circumscribed realm. This is the mistake made by Augustine (PI 3), and Wittgenstein himself held a similar presupposition in the *Tractatus*. The point is that rules and definitions can help to clear up a misunderstanding if used as 'pictures' to help us see clearly the grammar of language. But if treated as a true claim they can obscure the actual working of the language and thus cause further confusion.

Philosophical problems are thus confusions brought about by the very mode of enquiry that philosophers employ.[20] In doing philosophy we utter well formed sentences of natural language and assume that these propositions say

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[17] "For I *can* give the concept 'number' rigid limits in this way, that is, use the word 'number' for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is *not* closed by a frontier" (PI 68).

[18] "The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique for a game, and that then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand (i.e. get a clear view of)" (PI 125).

[19] "This general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible" (PI 5).

[20] "An unsuitable type of expression is a sure means of remaining in a state of confusion. It as it were bars the way out" (PI 339).

something. We think that we know what the proposition says – in fact we often think that it *must* say such-and-such because we have provided a strict definition.[21] Wittgenstein wants us to stop thinking that we know what propositions say and actually look to see whether our propositions say anything at all.[22] He accepts that any combination of words can be used to say something if we specify a definition for the words and start using them according to the rules laid down in our definition. But this is not the same as looking at the use of the proposition in the language-game that is its home.[23] Only by doing this will we see clearly what shows itself – the grammar of language.

Wittgenstein's diagnosis of philosophical problems in the *Investigations* is far richer than his account in the *Tractatus*, but it still adheres to the same principle. This is the idea that philosophical problems are confusions arising because we think that an utterance says something, and think we know what it says, but fail to see clearly that it says nothing. Philosophers see a problem and assume that it is to be solved by saying something. Instead their philosophical utterances are disguised nonsense which further stands in the way of seeing clearly and removing the confusion. Hence in the *Investigations*, as in the *Tractatus*, philosophical problems are not to be solved by saying something – whether empirical or non-empirical truths. They are to be dissolved by seeing clearly what shows itself. To see how this is possible we need to examine the methods of philosophy proposed in the *Investigations*.

2.2 The methods of philosophy

Far from prescribing a single, correct method in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein hopes to make philosophers appreciate that the range of possible methods is open-ended: "there is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like

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[21] "(Remember we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing)" (PI 217).

[22] "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice" (PI 340). "In order to see more clearly, here as in countless similar cases, we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them *from close to*" (PI 51). "But first we must learn to understand what it is that opposes such an examination of details in philosophy" (PI 52).

different therapies" (PI 133). There are many different methods because there are many different types of confusions – the range is open-ended. Philosophical problems may be grouped according to their similarities, there may be 'types' of philosophical problems, but each problem is a product of a particular confusion in a particular context. A particular confusion can be dissolved by various techniques – indeed sometimes it will require lots of different ways of approaching the problem before it is dissolved. However Wittgenstein encourages philosophers to let the type of confusion determine the method, rather than applying a predetermined method to a problem.

Although I wish to avoid the impression that Wittgenstein has a single method to be applied to all problems, it is helpful to recognise a distinctive theme that makes his ideas different to traditional philosophical methods. The overarching theme which characterises Wittgenstein's proposal for philosophical methods is "Don't think, but look" (PI 66), which I believe can be rephrased as "don't try to say something, try to see clearly what shows itself". A philosopher who has the wrong method is one who is "unable to simply look and see" (PI 93). I believe it is helpful to consider how the different methods recommended by Wittgenstein can be seen in terms of the principle that we must see clearly what shows itself rather attempt to solve problems with true statements.

In both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* Wittgenstein believed that philosophical problems are not empirical problems and cannot be solved by empirical methods.

> [Philosophical problems] are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognise those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them. (PI 109)

Traditional philosophical methods assume that problems will be solved by saying something – by stating true claims. Wittgenstein believed that problems are to be dissolved by seeing clearly what can be said. "The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known" (PI 109).

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[23] "'I know how the colour green looks to *me*' – surely that makes sense! – Certainly: what use of the proposition are you thinking of?" (PI 278).

Not only is it the case that philosophical problems are not empirical problems, but one major type of philosophical confusion results from the temptation to think that a philosophical problem can be solved by empirical means.[24]

As in the *Tractatus*, to dispel philosophical confusions we need to be able to tell whether or not an utterance says something or merely appears to say something, In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had an overly narrow conception of what would count as a proposition having sense – he required that it would have logical function in common with all other symbols that had the same sense. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein undermines the Tractarian assumption that each proposition has a logical essence and a single correct analysis – although he does confirm that it is possible to provide a definition of the essence, or a rule that stipulates the correct analysis, so long as this is done for a particular, limited purpose. To replace his method of logical analysis, Wittgenstein offers a different approach to the task of establishing whether an utterance has sense, but retains the principle that the grammar of a proposition shows itself in the use of the proposition. He calls these methods "grammatical investigations". The task is to try to see clearly how the word is used in the context where it does have meaning – in the context which is its home:

> When philosophers use a word – 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used this way in the language-game which is its original home? (PI 116)

It is not simply that we should look at the narrow use, in other words a specific application – we should look at the context in which it has usage, the whole context of practice in which the usage is meaningful.[25]

In both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* Wittgenstein wants us to look at what shows itself in the use of words, but in the *Tractatus* this was the logical use – the symbol or variable that represented the unique position of the term within the totality of logic. So, one and the same variable would apply throughout

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[24] "It shows a fundamental misunderstanding, if I am inclined to study the headache I have now in order to get clear about the philosophical problem of sensation" (PI 314).

the whole of language. In the *Investigations* the use is grammatical use – limited to a specific region of language, not the whole. Logic was seen as a perfect, complete system, such that the totality of logic is reflected in every proposition. If we know one logical symbol we already know all of logical space in advance. Grammar is not like this. It is not a perfect or complete system in the same way. (Although this does not mean that it is imperfect or incomplete.) One proposition does not give us access to the whole of grammar – it just gives us the grammar of that particular region of language.

To tell whether a proposition says something we should not look for a rule that will lay down what counts as a meaningful use of the words in advance of all future cases. Instead we must look to the application of the proposition in the actual practice of language use. The use can be described in rules, but the statements of the rules do not determine the use of the words. In the *Investigations* rules are not logical variables. For Wittgenstein, rules are reminders and ways of describing grammar for particular purposes. It is a mistake to treat them as though they say something. If you look too deep – look for the underlying rules that are hidden underneath the use of language – you will fail to see the grammar that shows itself in the actual use. If you look only at the appearance of the words you will also fail to see the grammar that shows itself in their application. What shows itself is open to view, it is neither the appearance of expressions, nor hidden underlying rules. It is the use of the word that we already know, insofar as we have mastery of the use of language. We fail to see it clearly because we fail to look in the right place – or fail to look at all.[26] We are too keen to say something, instead we need to look.

> Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. (PI 126)

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[25] "If, for example, someone says that the sentence 'This is here' (saying which he points to an object in front of him) makes sense to him, then he should ask himself in what special circumstances this sentence is actually used. There it does make sense" (PI 117).

[26] "What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (PI 415).

There is nothing that needs to be said. The aim is to see clearly what shows itself – to see what lies open to view.

To be able to tell whether an utterance says something or says nothing we need to use philosophical tools – in the *Tractatus* these were elucidations. In the *Investigations* they are characterised as grammatical reminders, which take many forms. Grammatical reminders include pictures, language-games, imagined cases and diagrams. Rather than rely on a particular tool to treat a confusion, we must remember to keep changing the tools – and to always see them as pictures, not as statements of what really exists. The philosophical work is to gradually loosen preconceptions, to change the fixed way that one thinks of the meaning of the term and look and see how it actually functions. The methods of philosophy involve finding ways to look at the functioning of ordinary language and try to see it clearly. The difficulty is that when we start thinking about language and talking about the meaning of words we impose our ideas on what we see and these pictures distort or obscure what we are meant to be studying. Constant vigilance is needed and it is important to return to our investigations from different directions, rather than deal with them in only one way. It can be very difficult to break through the illusion because our philosophical determination stands in the way of seeing propositions in their ordinary usage.[27]

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein distinguished between ordinary propositions and logical propositions and in the *Investigations* this is replaced by a distinction between empirical and grammatical propositions. As in the *Tractatus*, the important point is that every empirical proposition with sense both says something and shows something, whereas a grammatical proposition shows grammar, but says nothing.[28] Once again the task of natural science is to state true empirical propositions, but, as in the *Tractatus,* the task of philosophy is not simply to *state* grammatical propositions but to make use of them in a different way. One of the

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[27] "I might answer 'It's an English sentence; *apparently* quite in order – that is until someone wants to do something with it; it has a connection with other sentences which makes it difficult for us to say that nobody really knows what it tells us; but everyone who has not become calloused by doing philosophy notices that there is something wrong here'" (PI 348).

[28] Unlike in the *Tractatus*, a proposition that says something does not have to be either true or false – the proposition "Help!" has sense but is not true or false. But any proposition which says something also shows the grammar of the language-game where it is meaningful.

many methods of philosophy is to use grammatical propositions as reminders – elucidations – which draw attention to the grammar of language, grammar which shows itself but cannot be said. However, a major source of philosophical confusion arises because grammatical propositions are sometimes treated as though they are empirical propositions. The danger is that philosophers see grammatical propositions such as "all rods have length" as being obviously true, in fact so true that they cannot conceive of them being false. They then imagine that the claim represents an important truth about reality or the laws of thought. When we make such observations we need to realise that we are reminding ourselves of a grammatical paradigm, not a necessary truth (PI 50). Grammatical propositions do not say something (PI 56), they say nothing but only show the grammar of ordinary language use, which is open to view in our ordinary propositions if we look at them properly.

As in the *Tractatus*, philosophy is an activity not a body of doctrine. The methods of philosophy do not require us to make certain types of claims, but to look at the problems in a way that will dispel the confusions. The activity is to see clearly what shows itself, but this involves changing how we tend to look at language:

> In order to see clearly, here as in countless similar cases, we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them *from close to*. (PI 51)

Wittgenstein recognises that this is not how philosophy assumes that it should approach problems "we must learn to understand what it is that opposes such an examination of details in philosophy" (PI 52).[29] So what types of remark is a philosopher permitted to make? In one sense there are no restrictions on what a philosopher may say: "Does it matter what we say, so long as we avoid misunderstandings in any particular case?" (PI 48). However, our proper task is to clarify ordinary sentences, not to give the philosophical explanations that traditional philosophy would expect:

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[29] However, even this approach must come with a caveat, because we should not expect to deal with every problem in an identical manner. There may be some cases where seeing clearly involves drawing back from the detail and looking at the wider scene. "If I am supposed to describe how an object looks from far off, I don't make the description more accurate by saying what can be noticed about the object on closer inspection" (PI 171).

> We may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation* and description alone must take its place. (PI 109)

To say that philosophy must not provide explanations is not to say that it is prohibited from using empirical propositions, or that it must not attempt to say anything at all. Philosophers may use empirical propositions but, as in the *Tractatus*, the difference is that they are used to draw attention to what shows itself, rather than what they say. "In philosophy we do not draw conclusions. 'But it must be like this!' is not a philosophical proposition. Philosophy only states what everyone admits" (PI 599). So any proposition can be used in philosophy so long as it is being used qua grammatical reminder, rather than qua empirical proposition.

It would even be misleading to say categorically that avoiding explanations and theories is the *only* way to do philosophy, nothing else is permitted. This could give the impression of another dogmatic claim that may prevent us from seeing clearly in particular cases. It is not inconceivable that there may be occasions where it is appropriate to offer true claims and necessary conditions, if this is what it takes to elucidate a problem. We must be flexible and vigilant – to avoid cramp by not standing in one position for too long. This means that we should not dictate in advance only a limited range of elucidatory tools. Instead it is important to be creative and responsive in the face of emergent confusions. The prohibition against true claims and explanations has a particular use – it is used to emphasise that these should not be treated as an end, but only a means to an end. If our goal is to remove confusion then we must see clearly what shows itself and our methods should all be used towards this outcome, not towards the statement of true claims.

2.3 The outcome of a philosophical task

For Wittgenstein, the solutions that philosophers offer to philosophical problems are often the real problems. The substantial claims that are the results of traditional philosophical enquiry are, for Wittgenstein, only the raw material for philosophers to work on:

> What we 'are tempted to say' in such a case is, of course, not philosophy; but it is its raw material. Thus, for example, what a mathematician is inclined to say about the objectivity and reality of mathematical facts is not a philosophy of mathematics, but something for philosophical *treatment*. (PI 254)

The claims that philosophers are 'tempted to say' only have the appearance of saying something meaningful, they do not really say something meaningful. If something meaningful is actually said, then the statement is a contribution to natural science. If something appears to be said but actually nothing is said, then this typifies a philosophical confusion. This does not mean that in every case the outcome of the task of philosophy will be to reveal that the issue troubling philosophers is merely a confusion. It is possible that some issues that trouble philosophers are not in fact philosophical problems in Wittgenstein's sense. These may indeed require empirical solutions and cannot simply be made to disappear through grammatical clarification. However, the point is that recognising a problem to be an empirical problem and recognising what would count as an answer, even if we do not yet know the answer, is still an important contribution. In this case the confusion that has been dispelled is the confusion that the problem required a non-empirical answer. In such a case we would say that clarification of a problem that appeared to be philosophical enabled us to see it as an empirical problem, which can now be investigated by the natural sciences.

It is hard for traditional philosophy to remove the confident assurance that, even when we do not know the answer to a question, we seem to know already what the answer will be like. We might be happy to think that we don't know the exact answer already – we will need to make a discovery – but we are confident that we know what the answer will be like, and anything that does not fit this assumption will not be the correct answer.[30] This is precisely the crucial mistake, it is the mistake of thinking we know what is being said and know what would solve the problem, rather than looking to see whether there really is a problem:

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[30] "The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them – we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite

> Don't say: 'There must be something in common, or they would not be called games'. – But *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. [...] To repeat: don't think, but look! (PI 66)

If we see the tasks for philosophy in Wittgenstein's terms then one of the things we must accept is that it is impossible to specify in advance what the outcome of a particular philosophical task will be – insofar as it is not possible to say what will count as seeing clearly in each individual case. In one region of grammar seeing clearly may be best achieved with a picture that has an exact, determinate order, in another region it may be achieved with a picture that is vague and indistinct. "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (PI 127). In each case, the outcome of the task is simply to see clearly what *shows itself* rather than saying in advance what we must see when we see the language use clearly.

The result of a grammatical investigation is not new knowledge or a change in the use of language. "It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways" (PI 133). The result is seeing clearly the mastery of language that we already display in what we do. But seeing clearly does not mean that we uncover the 'real' hidden structure. Rather, we must simply see an order which helps to remove the particular misunderstanding that has caused our confusion. "We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order" (PI 132). It is possible that in some cases we may wish to reform the language use, but this is something that happens within ordinary language, it is not the outcome of a philosophical task.[31] The outcome of a philosophical task is not the clarification of grammar in the sense of making it orderly. The outcome of the task is seeing clearly the grammar of ordinary language as it is.

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concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.)" (PI 308).

[31] "Such a reform for practical purposes, an improvement in our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice is perfectly possible. But these are not the cases we have to do with [when doing philosophy]" (PI 132 – my addition).

> Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (PI 124).

Many of Wittgenstein's remarks have been treated as substantive claims, with the consequence that he is believed to hold theoretical positions. This is because his remarks are treated as though they are answers to philosophical problems, rather than grammatical reminders – remarks that are used merely for a particular purpose and then become redundant. For example, many remarks in the opening section of the *Investigations* are designed to loosen the grip of a certain picture of language – the picture which assumes that every word has a meaning and the meaning is something that corresponds to the word. One of the steps Wittgenstein takes is to ask philosophers to look at the use of words, rather than think that there must be a meaning in the mind that accompanies the word (PI 43). Philosophers have wrongly concluded that Wittgenstein holds that the meaning of a word is its use – that there are fixed, specific uses that determine the meaning of a word. This is a mistake – for one thing it is not helpful to claim that there are determinate limits to the uses of a word – this is no different to saying that each word has an essential meaning. The important point is not that Wittgenstein makes a claim – 'look to the *use'*– but that he asks us to do something, namely '*look* to the use'. To understanding the meaning of a word, to see clearly the grammar that shows itself in ordinary language use we can look to many things. We can look to the use, to the corresponding object, to an inner sensation, an outward gesture or a rule – we can look to anything we like, so long as we are attempting to see clearly rather than prescribing in advance what must be the case.

The outcome of grammatical investigation is that we see clearly whether the utterance that troubles us says something or says nothing. If it says nothing then our activity has led us to see that the utterance was nonsense although it appeared to have sense. When we see this clearly nothing further needs to be done to remove the problem. The removal of a philosophical confusion consists in seeing clearly that an apparently meaningful philosophical problem consists of expressions that say nothing. Seeing clearly what shows itself simply *is* seeing clearly when nothing needs to be said and the confusion disappears. The results of philosophy are thus not philosophical propositions or true claims. The outcome of

a philosophical task is not to gain new knowledge. The results are the gaining of clear vision by paying attention to what we already know.

From the perspective of traditional philosophy this outcome is likely to seem unsatisfactory. Although philosophical confusions are to be dissolved by seeing clearly what can be said, this does not mean that the achievement is merely linguistic – as though all that is achieved is talking about the words, but not the real issues that the words refer to.

> One ought to ask, not what images are or what happens when one imagines anything, but how the word 'imagination' is used. But that does not mean that I want to talk only about words. (PI 370)

The criticism that this type of investigation only deals with words begs the question against Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. To think this way is to be in the grip of the idea that the task of philosophy is to penetrate phenomena, to get behind the words to the real things. From this perspective, it may seem that the words we have are simply inadequate and this is why the problem resists explanation. Philosophers then either postulate a more complicated solution or claim that it is inexplicable. In particular we think that, if something cannot be defined, this means it is indefinable.[32] Instead Wittgenstein recommends that we should be prepared to resist the temptation to give explanations at all.

It is tempting, but wrong, to imagine that Wittgenstein's account makes philosophical problems trivial. Seen as *merely* linguistic confusion they are insignificant: as when a child mixes up the word "carrot" with the word "parrot" and claims that carrots can talk. Wittgenstein's point is that philosophical confusions are nothing more than confusions arising from language, but nonetheless extremely serious. They pervade extensive areas of our thought.[33] Philosophical problems are "grammatical illusions" but it is not enough to see

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[32] "(This role [of these words in our language] is what we need to understand in order to resolve philosophical paradoxes. And hence definitions usually fail to resolve them; and so, *a fortiori* does the assertion that a word is indefinable)" (PI 182).

[33] "The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language" (PI 111).

them simply as mistakes – it is better to see them as superstitions.[34] They are entrenched ways of thinking that involve deep confusions. It is correct that once we have clarified the confusion, once we see the grammatical fictions are mere illusions, then they do have a trivial character. But this is because once they can be seen like this the work has been done, the danger has been overcome. A philosophical problem is only a problem while the illusion remains unrecognised. So long as the confusion remains it is certainly not a trivial matter. When the confusion has been dispelled all that is left are trivial linguistic reminders – nothing substantive remains.[35] It is precisely because philosophers are looking for substantive philosophical claims that they believe that such an outcome of a philosophical task indicates that they whole activity is trivial and achieves nothing worthwhile. They fail to recognise that the activity of dissolving problems is valuable in its own right.

Wittgenstein colourfully characterises the outcome of his own philosophical methods as follows:

> The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery. (PI 119)

It is tempting to think that a philosopher encounters a pre-existing set of problems – as though the problems are just lying around in the world, waiting for philosophical answers. This is an illusion. Philosophical problems are not independent of the methods used in philosophical enquiry. Philosophical thought is what gives rise to the philosophical problems in the first place. When Wittgenstein likens philosophical methods to therapies this draws attention to a difference between his view and traditional philosophy. The methods of traditional philosophy are not sensitive to context, they apply indiscriminately to all problems. This is because the problems they deal with are problems that appear

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[34] "'Language (or thought) is something unique' – this proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions. And now the impressiveness retreats to these illusions, to the problems" (PI 110).

[35] "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI 128).

to transcend particular people, places and times. Wittgenstein's methods are therapies because to treat a problem is to treat a confusion – and a confusion is something that only a person or group of people can suffer from.[36] The language is not confused, the language is alright as it is. It is people who are confused because they fail to see clearly what is in plain view.[37] This does not mean that philosophical problems are merely psychological – such that it would not matter if a person were to be cured by a philosophical method or a drug. The outcome of a philosophical task is not a true piece of knowledge. It is an improvement in the life of a person. The person must see the connections for themselves and it will not just change what they see, but what they do.

> A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*. The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance to us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (PI 122)

The outcome of a task is not achieved when someone knows something they did not know before, but when they do something they did not do before. The following remark seems to sum up the outcome of a task

> I wanted to put a picture before him, and his acceptance of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is to compare it *with* this rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things*. (PI 144)

If you have an empirical problem and solve it, you can inform another person of the solution to the problem in a true empirical proposition. If you suffer from a philosophical confusion and manage to dispel the confusion, it is not possible to inform another person of the solution to the problem in a true philosophical proposition. You may offer elucidations, but these elucidations must be put to use by the person who has the confusion, it is not possible to solve someone else's confusion for them. You may only help them in their attempt to see clearly. The outcome of a philosophical task is not a piece of information that can be said. It is

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[36] "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (PI 255).

that a person sees clearly what shows itself – they see what can and cannot be said.

The way I have characterised Wittgenstein's view of philosophical tasks differs significantly from previous discussions of his thought. It is commonly claimed that Wittgenstein believed that all philosophical problems are really nonsense (E.g. Carruthers 1989, 57-58). If this is correct then the outcome of the philosophical task is when we have demonstrated that a particular utterance is nonsense. This is very misleading. For one thing the claim "all philosophical problems are nonsense" serves to assimilate the appearance of all the problems but it does not help us know how to deal with the problems, which might be very varied. Furthermore particular utterances are not categorically nonsense, nonsense once-and-for-all, as any combination of words can be meaningful if it can be used. Instead Wittgenstein's point is that philosophical confusions are disguised nonsense: nonsense that appears to have sense. This is significant because an utterance can only be disguised nonsense if we treat it as though it has sense and fail to see clearly that it does not. So, the fact that a particular utterance is nonsense is unimportant. What matters, what makes it philosophically problematic, is when we fail to see clearly that it is nonsense. This is why it is misleading to say that Wittgenstein viewed philosophical problems as nonsense. It is more helpful to say that philosophical confusions are a failure to see clearly whether or not something is being said. The outcome of a philosophical task is not to demonstrate that an utterance is nonsense, but to *see clearly* whether it is nonsense or sense. This is why it is important to see Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in terms of the say-show distinction, rather than in terms of the distinction between sense and nonsense.

2.4 The overall aim of philosophical activity

In the *Tractatus*, the ultimate aim of philosophical activity was to attain silence, when the task of philosophy was complete. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein talks about peace rather than silence, but there are significant parallels:

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[37] "The aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.)" (PI 129).

> The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* into question. (PI 133)

The overall aim of the *Tractatus* was complete clarity, but it was a misguided form of clarity "do not forget that all sorts of problems attach to the words 'to know' and 'to be clear'" (PI 30). In the *Investigations* the aim is still complete clarity but it is a different type: "for the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (PI 135). An important shift is made from clarifying logic to clarifying grammar, but the say-show distinction is why clarification is needed in both cases. Clarity in the *Investigations* no longer involves the demand that what we see clearly is exact, determinate and once-and-for-all. What we see clearly may be something indistinct, incomplete and inexact – but this does not matter, so long as it is sufficient for the confusions to be dispelled.

Understanding the aim of philosophy in terms of the say-show distinction can help to prevent a possible misunderstanding. The aim of philosophy according to the *Investigations* is not to produce grammatical reminders, or grammatical propositions which state the rules of grammar. The aim is to achieve clarity – to see clearly what can be said by paying attention to what shows itself. Once what can be said is said clearly, nothing else needs to be said, this is why clarity will bring peace to philosophical troubles. Furthermore the aim of philosophy is not simply to clarify confusions, but also to achieve peace by avoiding further confusion. Wittgenstein's method does not simply teach philosophers to cure problems, but also how to prevent them. Philosophers who have learned his method must put it into practice and take responsibility for not producing more disguised nonsense. They must pay attention to the words they use in order to say clearly what can be said and avoid using words that only appear to have sense.

Seen in this way the overall aim of philosophy for Wittgenstein is a positive achievement, not just a negative achievement. But this is overlooked because philosophers fail to appreciate the value of clarity. Seeing clearly, achieving clarity, is its own reward. When the problems are clarified and the confusion dispelled we are left without any new, substantial claims, but this does

not mean that our achievement is purely negative. The value of the achievement is determined by the work that has had to be done. As in the *Tractatus*, the value of each task depends upon how extensive is the particular problem – how deep the mistakes are in our thinking and how difficult it is to remove the confusion. The deeper the problem, the harder we must work before we can see clearly and the more it matters that we should try to do so. The work of philosophy is working on oneself and the aim of philosophy is to achieve clarity. This clarity is a personal achievement.[38]

Wittgenstein's philosophy does not announce the 'end of philosophy'. In the *Investigations* he does give the impression that he would like to insist that we get rid of all philosophical thought[39] – but this is not necessary even if it were possible. It is enough to insist that we should see clearly what we are doing and not take it for granted that our methods are suitable for every task. In particular we need to adopt methods that will minimise these sorts of confusions.

2.5 The task of the *Investigations*

The conception of philosophy introduced in the *Tractatus* was not strictly equivalent to the task performed in the book itself. The task of the *Tractatus* was more ambitious than the task of philosophy – it aimed to elucidate the limits of language once and for all in order to dissolve all the problems of philosophy. In comparison the task of the *Investigations* is just a part of the overall task of philosophy. It demonstrates many interconnected small scale investigations and in the process teaches Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy. The *Investigations* does not aspire to provide the final solution to all the problems of philosophy, but it does teach us an open-ended way of dealing with problems, even the many problems that philosophers have not yet encountered.

In the *Investigations*, as in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's aim is to replace traditional philosophy with an alternative conception, rather than to solve particular philosophical problems, or to reveal particular instances of disguised

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[38] "Work in philosophy [...] is really more work on oneself. On one's conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them.)" (*Culture and Value* p.24)

[39] "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question" (PI 133).

nonsense. "What is your aim in philosophy? – To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (PI 309). His aim is to teach a method, not just to report the results of his enquiry.[40] He states "my aim is: *to teach you* to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (PI 464 – my emphasis). To achieve this he does not present an explanation of his method – he demonstrates his method. Like the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* is not a textbook. It is a sketchbook of Wittgenstein's own travels, but it is not to be studied merely in order to see where he explored "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (PI Preface p.viii). Its role is to encourage others to journey for themselves, but also to provide some signposts for places where people commonly go astray.

As in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein hoped to encourage philosophers to let go of their methodological presuppositions and adopt a different way of doing philosophy which involves a shift from thinking to looking, or from saying to seeing what shows itself.

> One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a stupid prejudice. (PI 340)

The difficulty is how to break out of the circle. Seen from the perspective of traditional philosophy, Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is unacceptable – it appears quietist, defeatist and trivialises the value of philosophy.

> Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand. (PI 118)

Wittgenstein must break this perspective in order to make people see the value of his new conception. One of the ways that he does this is by giving traditional philosophy a voice in the *Investigations* – he engages in dialogue with one or more interlocutors. The interlocutors do not represent a single viewpoint, just

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[40] "Teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different to that which '*points beyond*' them" (PI 208).

various ways of doing philosophy that Wittgenstein is aiming to escape. By giving a voice to traditional philosophers and making their confusions part of his own concern, he encourages philosophers to work with him and engage with the activity he is undertaking, rather than judge his work critically from an external point of view.

In particular Wittgenstein anticipates that, seen from the perspective of traditional philosophy, what he is doing will appear to be behaviourism,[41] nominalism[42], relativism,[43] or positivism. In all of these cases it is because the philosopher treats Wittgenstein's remarks as though they say something (and thinks he or she recognises what the remarks say) rather than using the remarks as grammatical reminders to look at what shows itself.

> For this is what disputes between Idealists, Solipsists and Realists look like. The one part attack the normal form of expression as if they were attacking a statement; the others defend it, as if they were stating facts recognised by every human being. (PI 402)

In both cases confusions are perpetuated because philosophers attempt to say something, rather than realise that the problem cannot be solved by saying a statement of fact. Wittgenstein's aim is to help philosophers by teaching them to realise when they think they are saying something but are not saying what they think they are saying. This does not mean he is prohibiting the use of certain words, or saying that certain words cannot be combined, nor is he prohibiting the discussion of certain issues, such as ethics. But he does want to draw philosopher's attention to the fact that when language uses are removed from the context of their original language-game they need to be given a use, otherwise what they say "may be anything or nothing" (PI 6).

Wittgenstein does not rule out any uses of language as illicit, including the claims made by traditional philosophy. This is why he gives a voice to traditional

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[41] "'Are you not really a behaviourist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behaviour is a fiction?' – If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction" (PI 307).

[42] "We are not analysing a phenomenon (e.g. thought) but a concept (e.g. that of thinking), and therefore the use of a word. So it may look as if what we were doing were Nominalism" (PI 383).

[43] "'So does it depend wholly on our grammar what will be called (logically) possible and what not – i.e. what that grammar permits?' – But surely that is arbitrary! – Is it arbitrary?" (PI 520).

views in the *Investigations*. There is no combination of words or marks that necessarily lacks sense – i.e. there is no sign that cannot be given a sense. "'I know how the colour green looks to *me'* – surely that makes sense! – Certainly: what sense of the proposition are you thinking of?" (PI 278). His criticism of the claims of traditional philosophy is not that they are categorically nonsense – it is not that they 'say nothing' in the strong sense that it is impossible for those words to say anything at all. The criticism is simply to ask philosophers to look and see that the words do not say what it is that they appear to say. They may be given a sense – there may be a language-game in which those words do say something – but removed from that context of use the words do not say anything.

Wittgenstein does not need to make a grand claim about the status of the remarks in the *Investigations* as he did in TLP 6.54. However, it is still important that the reader of the *Investigations* should not treat the remarks as substantial philosophical claims. We might still say that the remarks need to be read as elucidations rather than propositions, in other words with awareness that they should be used to draw attention to what shows itself, rather than read for what they appear to say. To make this difference apparent, every grammatical investigation presented in the *Investigations* is open-textured. Every remark, doubt, objection, mistake and correction is exposed and laid out to view. This is intended to prevent the reader from treating the remarks as substantial claims. As in the *Tractatus*, it is still the case that if the remarks of the *Investigations* are treated as theses and explanations they will produce nonsense. This is because philosophers assume they know what the remarks say, but the remarks will fail to have a proper use in the contexts where they are employed. Moreover, nothing of any value can be achieved by simply reporting the results of the investigation as philosophical claims. Wittgenstein is not attempting to put into words his own clarity of vision, he is offering examples of the elucidations he has used to overcome his own confusions and inviting the reader to use these, and other methods, to overcome their own confusions. Wittgenstein is not attempting to put into words what shows itself. Instead he is seeking to draw our attention to what shows itself and teach us the importance of attempting to see clearly rather than stating philosophical theses. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein is not informing

us of the things that can be said. He is teaching us what we must do. We should see clearly what can be said, by paying attention to what shows itself, and avoid uttering remarks that fail to say clearly what can be said.

3 The say-show distinction in the *Investigations*

I have claimed that the say-show distinction is the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*. By this I mean that the distinction is what we need to understand if we are to understand his conception of philosophy.

The say-show distinction can help us see philosophical problems in the right light. Philosophical problems are confusions because we treat philosophical utterances as though they say something, but they actually say nothing. This is not because philosophical propositions *cannot* say something, but rather that they do not say anything in the context that they are uttered. There are many different types of philosophical problems and many different types of philosophical methods.

The say-show distinction is the basis of the methods of grammatical investigation. Grammar shows itself in propositions that say something, but is not itself something that can be said. Philosophical methods attempt to clarify grammatical confusions through the use of grammatical remarks – remarks which draw attention to what shows itself, but are not to be treated as making true statements. We do not need special propositions to do this. We can use any type of utterance as a grammatical reminder: all that matters is that we see clearly what shows itself.

The say-show distinction helps us to dispel philosophical problems and it helps us to avoid philosophical problems. It enables us to move from disguised nonsense to patent nonsense and to say clearly what can be said, thus avoiding further nonsense. In both cases the outcome of a philosophical task is when we see clearly what shows itself. The nature of the clarity cannot be specified in advance in the way that the solution to an empirical problem can be anticipated. When we see clearly that a particular problem is a confusion, when we see clearly the grammar, the problem is dissolved.

Philosophical activity takes place only within the realm of language. What can be said can be said and the grammar of language is what shows itself. What lies outside language neither says nor shows. It is nonsense or silence. The overall aim of philosophical activity is to reach peace when what can be said has been said and there is no need to say anything further. There is no fixed logical limit to the totality of language, so there is not a final resting place for philosophy, just respite from particular confusions.

Saying and showing are not two distinct realms of expression. What shows itself is simply the grammar of everything that can be said. One of the sources of philosophical confusion that Wittgenstein hopes to teach us to avoid is precisely the confusion that has caused the say-show distinction to be misunderstood. Philosophers have been tempted to think that various problems are so difficult that they are indefinable, or indescribable. These concepts are so extraordinary that they cannot be expressed in ordinary language, we can only know that they are beyond the limit of what can be expressed. One temptation is to think that we can conceive what it is that a nonsensical proposition would say if it did say something.[44] This is why the say-show distinction has been treated as leaving room for ineffable facts – facts that can be expressed by 'showing' but not by 'saying'.

> So, in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would just like to emit an inarticulate sound. – But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language-game, which should now be described. (PI 261)

Wittgenstein makes this point to emphasise that his conception of philosophy does not lead to the view that there are things that philosophy cannot say. Instead it must be seen as the claim that philosophers must learn to recognise when there is nothing to be said. Everything that can be said has a place in the grammar of

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[44] "But what we really want is to simply take 'Red exists' as the statement: the word 'red' has a meaning. Or perhaps better: 'Red does not exist' as '"Red" has no meaning'. Only we do not want to say that expression says this, but that this is what it would have to be saying if it meant anything. But that it contradicts itself in the attempt to say it – just because red exists 'in its own right'. Whereas the only contradiction lies in something like this: the proposition looks as if it were about the colour, while it is supposed to be saying something about the use of the word 'red'" (PI 58).

language, this grammar can be seen clearly thanks to descriptions and grammatical reminders. If we are tempted to make an inarticulate sound then we must not assume that it says something or that there is something that it fails to say. Instead we must find ways to see clearly whether it has a role in a language-game. If it does not, then this does not indicate that it has failed to put an ineffable phenomenon into words. It simply says nothing and shows nothing.

4 Summary

The conception of philosophy in the *Investigations* is fundamentally the same as the *Tractatus*, and, as in the *Tractatus*, it can be properly understood in terms of the say-show distinction. Philosophical problems are disguised nonsense because they are treated as though they say something, when in fact they say nothing. Philosophy is still an activity not a body of doctrine. It is the activity of conducting grammatical investigations which involve seeking to see clearly what can be said. The correct method of philosophy takes many forms, not a single correct form, but the methods are different ways of seeing clearly what shows itself. Grammar replaces Logic as what shows itself but cannot be said. The result of a philosophical task is to dissolve problems by seeing clearly what is already known – the mastery of language use – not discovering new facts. The aim of philosophy is 'peace' when nothing further needs to be said.

Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is not derived from a particular account of language. He does not have a "use-theory" of meaning, a "communitarian theory" of rule-following, or an "anti-realist" view of concepts, nor is he a "quietist" about the relation between mind, language and world. Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is derived from an insight that is the legacy from the *Tractatus*: everything that can be said can be said, and when we cannot speak meaningfully we should be silent. His views of mind, language and world arise from specific applications of his methods. They are responses to particular confusions, not definitive positions. The remarks of the *Investigations* can be thrown away just as much as those of the *Tractatus*. Not because the remarks are categorically nonsense, but because they become redundant once they have been used by the reader to learn the methods of philosophy and once they have been used in the activity of paying attention to what shows itself.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Content

1 Thesis overview

I have argued for the thesis that the say-show distinction is the basis for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. By making this connection and supporting it with an exegesis of both texts, I have provided a correct account of his conception of philosophy and a correct account of the say-show distinction.

The thesis is motivated by Wittgenstein's claim that the *Investigations* should be read in conjunction with the *Tractatus*. I have argued that to understand the *Investigations* in this way requires us to first understand the role of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus*. Furthermore, to achieve a proper understanding of both texts they must be read from the perspective of Wittgenstein's own conception of philosophy rather than from a traditional perspective. I identified the desirable features for such an interpretation and used these conditions to evaluate three available readings of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*.

I have argued that all three of the available readings fail because they do not properly appreciate the connection between the say-show distinction and Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Metaphysical Readings highlight the say-show distinction, but fail to understand Wittgenstein's view that philosophy is an activity not a doctrine. Hence they do not correctly interpret Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and hold that the say-show distinction is a paradoxical or incoherent doctrine. This type of reading has led philosophers to claim that the *Investigations* rejects the say-show distinction. Therapeutic Readings interpret Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in terms of a distinction between sense and nonsense, rather than the say-show distinction. Hence they present only a limited view of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and hold that the say-show distinction is a nonsensical pseudo-doctrine. This type of reading is not able

to support the claim that the *Investigations* retains the say-show distinction. McGinn's Elucidatory Reading offers a more promising interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and, as a result, does not treat the say-show distinction as a doctrine or pseudo-doctrine. However, she treats the say-show distinction only as one application of Wittgenstein's method, rather than the basis for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. This would make it difficult for her to explain how the say-show distinction is retained in the *Investigations*, even though she is committed to that claim.

Having argued that none of the available readings are adequate to explain the role of the say-show distinction in the *Investigations*, I presented my own readings of the say-show distinction in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. To do so I have argued that Wittgenstein's main purpose in both books was to replace traditional philosophy with an alternative conception of philosophy, which can only be understood through the say-show distinction. My readings of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* demonstrate that they are different attempts to present the same conception of philosophy. I describe how, in both cases, Wittgenstein uses the say-show distinction to present a distinctive account of the nature of philosophical problems, the appropriate methods of philosophy, the end result of a philosophical task and the overall aim of philosophy.

I have argued that my interpretation provides a correct view of the significant continuities and discontinuities between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. The failure of the *Tractatus* was not a flaw in the conception of philosophy presented in it, nor a flaw in the say-show distinction. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein failed to implement properly his proposed conception of philosophy, as he remained in the grip of traditional philosophical presuppositions. His main presupposition was a requirement for perfect clarity, which led him to offer the general form of a proposition as a single elucidation for the totality of logical form. The *Investigations* presents the same conception of philosophy, but freed from the presuppositions of the *Tractatus*, particularly the requirement for perfect clarity. Rather than offer a single elucidation for the whole of language, Wittgenstein teaches many elucidatory methods which can be used to clarify particular regions of grammar. As in the *Tractatus*, seeing clearly involves paying

attention to what shows itself, rather than stating true claims. The say-show distinction thus remains the basis of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Investigations*.

2 Fulfilling the *desiderata*

In Chapter 2, I offered the *desiderata* for any interpretation of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*. I can now explain how my interpretation satisfies these conditions.

My reading of the *Tractatus* presented an account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, demonstrating consistency between what he took himself to be doing and what he hoped other philosophers would do. I was able to give a coherent account of his remarks about the "correct method" for philosophy; the difference between philosophy and science; the view that philosophy is an activity not a body of doctrine; and the view that philosophy results in clarification of propositions not philosophical propositions.

I gave full credence to Wittgenstein's claim that "the whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (TLP Preface p.3). To achieve this I argued that this statement sums up Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and argued that the whole sense of the *Tractatus* was to introduce this conception of philosophy. Giving full credence to this statement in the Preface also ensured that my reading prioritised TLP 7 rather than TLP 6.54 and thus avoided the mistakes made by other readings, which have misguidedly built their view of Wittgenstein's philosophy around TLP 6.54.

By prioritising TLP 7 I was able to deal with the problems created by TLP 6.54. My reading made it possible to explain how the *Tractatus* consists of elucidations, yet the elucidations are to be thrown away as nonsense, including the remark that tells us that the elucidations are nonsense. However I did not have to make commitments to 'important nonsense' that shows what cannot be said. I argued that the elucidations of the *Tractatus* do not 'show' anything as they are used to draw attention to what shows itself. Elucidations are not, strictly speaking nonsense, but they do become nonsense if treated as though they are propositions. The role of TLP 6.54 is to remind the reader to treat the elucidations of the

Tractatus as such, rather than treating them as propositions. In the *Tractatus* the elucidation of the general form of a proposition was unsuccessful but only because it generated confusions, not because it was a doctrine, or because it involved important nonsense.

I was able to explain why Wittgenstein believed that in the *Tractatus* he had found "on all essential points the final solution of the problems [of philosophy]" (TLP Preface p.4). I argued that Wittgenstein hoped to achieve this by replacing the traditional conception of philosophy with an alternative conception. He undermined the view that philosophical problems can be solved with true philosophical propositions and replaced this with the view that philosophical confusions are to be dissolved by seeing clearly that nothing needs to be said. Hence he believed that the application of his "correct method" would provide the means for making all philosophical problems disappear. This view of his project allowed me to explain the significance of the general form of a proposition and explain why Wittgenstein felt that his task was to draw a limit to the expression of thought (TLP Preface p.4).

My reading of the *Tractatus* gave special emphasis to the say-show distinction. I was able to demonstrate that the say-show distinction is central to the whole *Tractatus* and accounted for those notions, such as logical relations and formal concepts, which are shown but cannot be said. To achieve this I argued that the say-show distinction is the basis for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Furthermore I argued that, properly understood as a elucidatory principle rather than a philosophical doctrine, the say-show distinction does not make the *Tractatus* self-refuting.

In Chapter 6 I gave a detailed account of why Wittgenstein considered the *Tractatus* a success when he published the book in 1921, and why he subsequently claimed "I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book" (PI Preface p.viii). At the same time I was able to explain why the *Investigations* can "be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of [his] old way of thinking" (PI Preface p.viii). I argued that it was possible to understand these claims by recognising that he was working with fundamentally the same conception of philosophy in both books. His

realisation of the grave mistakes in the *Tractatus* led him to revise his approach in the *Investigations* significantly, but he did not reject the conception of philosophy or the say-show distinction. Instead he wanted the *Tractatus* to stand as a warning to others of the mistakes he made whilst attempting to implement his conception of philosophy. Thus it is by claiming that Wittgenstein retained a conception of philosophy based on the say-show distinction that I have been able to point out which aspects of the *Investigations* are in agreement with ideas in the *Tractatus* and which aspects are criticisms of ideas in the *Tractatus*.

My reading of the *Investigations* presented an account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in that work and I argued that there is consistency between what he took himself to be doing and what he hoped other philosophers would do. By arguing that this conception of philosophy is based on the say-show distinction, I was able to give a coherent account of his view that there are many philosophical methods not *a* method; that philosophy must use descriptions rather than explanations and that complete clarity will mean that philosophical problems completely disappear.

I have accounted for the way that both texts present a singular challenge to commentators. In neither case is it appropriate to select a remark and treat it as a philosophical proposition, in other words as though it 'says' something. Instead the remarks must be seen in the context of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. In the *Tractatus* the remarks form part of a logical system that is designed to draw attention to what shows itself – the logical form underlying ordinary language. In the *Investigations* the remarks are part of a series of examples that teach various methods of grammatical investigation and demonstrate how to pay attention to what shows itself – the grammar of ordinary language. My readings show why Wittgenstein felt it necessary to present the remarks in a different idiosyncratic style in the two books. In the *Tractatus,* where the sequence of remarks is numbered in order of logical importance, each remark was designed to be as pure and economical as possible. Each remark is in an exact logical place and numbered in order to make clear its logical relations with other remarks. By contrast, in the *Investigations* we see the advantage of coming back to the same point from a number of different directions and different contexts.

When he shifts from logical analysis to grammatical investigations, Wittgenstein emphasises the need for a variety of pictures, rather than a single picture of language, but in both cases the pictures serve to draw attention to what shows itself. This is how my reading is able to explain why "the very nature of the investigation" in the *Investigations* compelled Wittgenstein to present his ideas as an "album" of "remarks" or "sketches" (PI Preface p.vii), and why the remarks could not be forced into a single ordered sequence. I was also able to account for the polyphony of voices in the *Investigations*. In both cases I use Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy to understand the physiognomy of his texts, rather than resort to a distorted mode of textual interpretation as a key to unlock his philosophical ideas.

My readings take into account that in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* Wittgenstein is simultaneously treating philosophical problems and introducing a new method for dissolving philosophical problems. He introduces an alternative conception of philosophy to challenge the traditional conception, and he demonstrates and teaches that conception of philosophy by tackling philosophical problems. However, Wittgenstein's concern in both the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* was not the treatment of particular philosophical problems but the problem of philosophy itself. His ambition was to understand the nature of philosophical problems and provide methods for treating all philosophical problems, not just the problems that feature in the books. Both texts contain localised treatments of particular problems but this was not his main achievement, the various investigations are illustrations of his methods and a way of teaching the reader to engage in the activity of attempting to see clearly what shows itself. In my reading I use this point to make sense of the claim that the *Tractatus* is "not a textbook" (TLP Preface p.3) and have attempted to consider why the book might "be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts expressed in it" (TLP Preface p.3). I use the same point to understand why Wittgenstein states in the *Investigations* "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (PI Preface p.viii).

By fulfilling the *desiderata*, I have provided readings of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* from the perspective of Wittgenstein's own conception of philosophy, rather than from a traditional perspective.

3 Avenues for future research

My thesis encourages scholars of Wittgenstein to read the *Tractatus* alongside the *Investigations*, rather than take their view of his ideas solely from the *Investigations*. I hope it will also have relevance to philosophers who are not Wittgenstein scholars, and those not interested in exegesis, insofar as it presents a conception of philosophy that can be judged on its own merits.

There are several issues of interest that I have not addressed in this thesis, particularly Wittgenstein's views on ethics, aesthetics, religion and mathematics. Many of these issues feature prominently in collections of Wittgenstein's work that have been published posthumously from his notes, or from lecture notes transcribed by his students. For example: *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. My focus in this thesis has been to provide a robust account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and, to achieve this, it was not necessary to explore these other issues. But I hope that the interpretation I have offered here may open new avenues for dealing with these issues and offer a helpful approach for interpreting the remainder of Wittgenstein's published and unpublished work. This will involve reading his remarks about these issues as grammatical reminders, rather than philosophical propositions and paying attention to the grammar that shows itself in our ordinary language, rather than looking for true claims in his books.

I have not attempted to evaluate Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, or to defend his views against critics. However, if the conception of philosophy I have presented here is correct, it presents a particular area of concern that will need to be addressed if this conception of philosophy is to be accepted. I will not tackle this problem here, but raise it as a concern requiring future attention. For Wittgenstein the goal of philosophical endeavour is to achieve clarity – to see

clearly. Clarity is an end in itself, not a means to an end, as he says in the following remark from *Culture and Value*:

> Our civilisation is characterised by the word progress. Progress is its form, it is not one of its properties that it makes progress. *Typically* it constructs. Its *activity* is to construct a more and more complicated structure. And even clarity is just a means to this end and not an end in itself. For me, on the contrary, clarity, transparency is an end in itself. I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me. So I am aiming at something different than are the scientists and my thoughts move differently than do theirs. (*Culture and Value* p.9)

From a biographical perspective, the fact that Wittgenstein prized clarity as the highest value is evident in his views about music, literature, architecture, teaching, his views about ethics and his relationships with others. It is also the basis of his self-development and self-criticism.[1] I have argued that when we 'see clearly', what we see is what 'shows itself' and this is not something that can be said. I believe that the fact that clarity is built upon the say-show distinction in this way leaves open a potential target for critics of his conception of philosophy. The problem is that, if we cannot put what it is that we see clearly into words, then how can we tell whether clarity has been achieved? How can we know if we are truly seeing clearly, or just have the illusion of seeing clearly? One indication would be that we know when we are seeing clearly because the philosophical problem that has plagued us vanishes and we are left with a sense of peace. This seems a reasonable criterion. But we may still ask how we will know when the problem has vanished or whether we are just under the illusion that the problem has vanished? The response to this is that we know when the problem has genuinely vanished when clarity has been achieved – when we can see clearly what shows itself. The problem with this criterion is that it is circular. Of course, this apparent circularity will only constitute an objection for someone who requires that the value of clarity be justified in terms of some further condition,

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[1] These features of Wittgenstein's life are discussed by McGuinness (1988), Janik and Toulmin (1973) and Monk (1991).

and I am optimistic that it will be possible to respond to this potential objection, but must leave this task for a future study.

Wittgenstein's view that clarity is an end in itself highlights the major difference between science and his conception of philosophy. It perhaps also offers an interesting avenue for exploring the similarity between philosophical activity and artistic work. Wittgenstein's distinction between philosophy and science should be treated only as a distinction for a particular purpose, rather than a dogmatic assertion. It is helpful when used to clear up confusions that arise when philosophical claims are treated as though they are empirical claims, due to superficial similarities in the forms of expression. Seen in this way, and not as a dogmatic position, I think it will prove valuable to use Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as the basis for discussing similarities and differences between philosophy and science. This may make it possible to defend a distinctive role for philosophy against the prevailing trend towards scientism. The potential for exploring this issue in a new way is a particularly valuable outcome of this thesis.

Reading Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in terms of the say-show distinction should invite reconsiderations of the historical context of his work. This avenue could be fruitfully explored by comparing the conception of philosophy presented here with the work of writers, such as Schopenhauer, who are known to have had an influence on Wittgenstein's thought.[2] This would help us to understand whether Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, understood in terms of the say-show distinction, is a genuinely original conception of philosophy. A further avenue for discussion would be to conduct a similar study of Wittgenstein's subsequent influence on other philosophers. The interpretation presented in this thesis opens these questions as new avenues for enquiry because it invites us to ignore the issue of whether Wittgenstein held the same doctrines as other thinkers, and instead consider whether they were doing something similar. It permits us to draw comparisons based on the work they *do*, rather than the philosophical claims they *say*.

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[2] Lawrence Goldstein has recently written on the historical influences on Wittgenstein's thought, and has not identified a source for the say-show distinction (Goldstein 2003).

Although I have not discussed Wittgenstein's relation to other philosophers, my reading does leave me in a position to comment as to why Wittgenstein did not consider it important to discuss the work of other historical figures in philosophy. I suggest that Wittgenstein's work is seen as ahistorical because he is concerned primarily with problems that plague him. If he did not feel in the grip of a particular confusion, feel the urge to say something, then for him there was no work to be done. It is significant that the *Tractatus* is one of the few texts that Wittgenstein does consider. He looks back to the *Tractatus* as an historical work, but he does so precisely because he feels the grip of the confusions in the *Tractatus* – they are his problems. When writing the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein was mainly concerned with logical problems. These were his problems, but they arose through his contact with Frege and Russell. When writing the *Investigations* he was concerned with confusions from a much wider variety of sources, including many psychological issues. His infrequent references to other writers, such as Augustine and William James, are not an indication of his agreement with their solutions to philosophical problems. Rather that he recognises in their work confusions that he himself suffered from and struggled to escape.

Wittgenstein's contribution to various philosophical disputes has been misunderstood because his achievements have been assimilated to make them fit a pattern demanded by traditional philosophy. Many writers are overly confident about Wittgenstein's treatment of philosophical issues – a good example is Peter Hacker's recently published *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies.* Although this provides an extremely high quality discussion of themes from Wittgenstein's work, the tone of the book is significant. Hacker gives the impression that many of the problems still perplexing contemporary philosophers have been solved by Wittgenstein. In effect the hard work has been done and the solution to those philosophical problems is readily available if philosophers would only read and understand Wittgenstein's arguments. I think that this misses the real point of Wittgenstein's work. The real point was not to solve particular problems once and for all, but to teach a way of doing philosophy that would encourage philosophers to tackle their own confusions, to help them clear up

confusions suffered by other people and above all to avoid generating further confusion or disguised nonsense.

When we are dealing with a philosophical confusion it may or may not matter what Wittgenstein said about the issue, because it is not always helpful to characterise the problems in exactly the same way that Wittgenstein set them up. A lot of work has been done by philosophers to establish exactly what problem Wittgenstein was combating and how he dealt with the problem.[3] By putting Wittgenstein's arguments on a pedestal, philosophers fail to address the confusions that are most relevant to them personally. Wittgenstein did not want to spare others the trouble of thinking (or rather the trouble of attempting to see clearly) but this is exactly what has happened. The idea that Wittgenstein has solved these problems means that the old idols have been replaced by new idols – namely the absence of idols.[4] When Wittgenstein deals with the private language problem, he is not providing a solution to a problem of philosophy – he is not adding a solution to the body of doctrine. Rather, he is demonstrating how he has worked through his own confusions in an attempt to see clearly what can be said and see which utterances say nothing. The significance of his work does not lie in the results of his investigations, but the method that can be learnt by tracing his steps. To dispel philosophical confusion we should not look at what Wittgenstein says, we should look at what Wittgenstein does. We should not look to Wittgenstein to solve our problems; we must solve our own problems for ourselves.

This sheds light on a further issue. Philosophers have been right to insist that Wittgenstein's later work should not be systematised, but the correct reason for this is not always appreciated. The point is that Wittgenstein's treatment of confusions should not be reduced to a set of philosophical propositions because doing so makes it appear that he is offering a solution to a problem – a solution that can be said. Instead Wittgenstein's treatment of confusions cannot be reduced to a set of philosophical propositions because he does not provide solutions to

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[3] To see this we need only consider the debate that has followed Kripke's interpretation of what is now known as "Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument".

problems. His treatments are elucidations that need to be used by someone who is attempting to see clearly what shows itself but cannot be said. An elucidation does not do anything if it is not used – this is because it does not say anything. When a confusion is dispelled by a person seeing clearly what can and cannot be said, this is not something that can be put into words and conveyed to another person. This is why there is not progress in philosophy the same way that there is in science. We do not add to an increasing body of knowledge – each generation must tackle their own problems for themselves.[5]

I do not deny that Wittgenstein's elucidations (both in the *Tractatus* and *Investigations*) can be re-deployed successfully when philosophers suffer from confusions. My point is that philosophers have been too quick to treat these arguments as definitive solutions to the problem and this is precisely what Wittgenstein did not intend. Philosophers commonly refer to Wittgenstein's rule-following argument, his theory of family resemblance and his rejection of private mental objects. To see these as the results of his grammatical investigations and as solutions to problems, is to treat confusions as problems that can be cured in one way. But it is a mistake to think that anyone and everyone who suffers from such problems can be given the same cure. Too often people do exegesis of Wittgenstein by first explaining how he characterises a particular problem and then how he knocks that particular problem down. This does not achieve anything unless the problem was really a confusion for the persons concerned. It is far more valuable to tackle new, relevant problems – perhaps ones that Wittgenstein himself did not even consider.

Although I hope to dissuade philosophers from concentrating solely on the problems that Wittgenstein considered important, I do think it will be fruitful to apply Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy to contemporary problems. Rather than speculate too widely, it seems appropriate to outline some avenues for future

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[4] In the *Big Typescript* Section 88 Wittgenstein wrote "(All that philosophy can do is destroy idols. And that means not creating a new one – for instance as in 'absence of an idol')" (Reprinted in *Philosophical Occasions* p.171)

[5] "We keep hearing the remark that philosophy really does not progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. Those who say this however don't understand why it is so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions" (*Culture and Value* p.22)

research that I intend to pursue. My immediate plan is to investigate confusions found in contemporary accounts of the problem of personal identity.[6] Many influential writers in this field, such as Sydney Shoemaker and David Parfit, have argued that certain types of causal connection are a necessary condition for personal identity, or for psychological connectedness with a future self. Specifically, these "M-type causal connections" are required to underpin memories, intentions and desires, which are then used as the psychological characteristics that underpin the account of personal identity or survival. To consider how these philosophical problems may consist of grammatical confusions, I plan to conduct a grammatical investigation into the role of causal connections by comparing a variety of claims that are made about personal identity. I hope to demonstrate that the claims made by Shoemaker, Parfit and others are cases where certain forms of expression have been removed from the ordinary context in which they are meaningful and have been misapplied in a philosophical context. In particular I suspect that similarities between ordinary expressions that state reasons for action have been confused with expressions that specify causes, an issue that has already been usefully investigated by Julia Tanney.[7]

An investigation of confusions in personal identity and philosophy of mind will be a step towards my gaining a clearer understanding of the issue of responsibility. At present I find that the question of whether a person was responsible for their actions typically involves confused causal accounts of their intentions and their identity over time. My long term interest is to elucidate the issue of authorial responsibility[8] – particularly to consider how differing degrees of responsibility are used to judge authors in the fields of literature, philosophy and science. To investigate this topic, I have designed a module called *Responsibility*, available for 3rd year undergraduates at University College Cork.

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[6] My interest in this topic arises from teaching an MA Module on Personal Identity. It is also a return to my own MA work on first person self reference, with Dr Andy Hamilton.

[7] My interest in this topic started whilst teaching Philosophy of Mind alongside Dr Julia Tanney, see Tanney (1995) "Why Reasons May Not be Causes" *Mind & Language* vol. 10, nos. 1/2 pp. 103-126.

[8] I explore this topic in a paper called "Authorship: Origin and Originality" to be presented at the *Writing Aesthetics* Conference in May 2003, hosted by the International Association for Philosophy and Literature.

The module aim is: "To achieve a clearer understanding of the concept of responsibility and address problems arising from misunderstandings of this concept".[9] In this series of investigations I will attempt to find ways of paying attention to the grammar that shows itself in ordinary language, in order to see clearly what it makes sense to say and recognise when nothing is being said.

These avenues for future research are a consequence of my view that the *Investigations* should be read in the right light against the background of the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* stands as a reminder to the reader of the *Investigations*. It warns of the mistakes that it is easy to fall into whilst learning and applying the conception of philosophy introduced in the *Investigations*. In particular it highlights the danger of treating particular elucidations or descriptions as the final outcome of philosophical activity. It demonstrates how easy it is to see particular pictures as the solution to a problem, rather than something that must drop away, or must be used in conjunction with many other pictures. To do this is to fall into the trap of treating elucidations as though they say something – as though they communicate a solution for a problem. Elucidations do not provide a solution to a problem, only the activity of attempting to see clearly what shows itself can do this. To forget this is the price of ignoring the elucidatory reminder that "what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said". However, the truly grave mistake would be to forget that the say-show distinction is itself an elucidation and treat it as a substantive doctrine that will solve all the problems of philosophy by itself. I have argued that the say-show distinction is the basis for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, and concluded that this conception of philosophy has at its heart a commitment to clarity, but this thesis does not represent the end result of my research. Rather, it is just the start of the hard work. Clarity is not something that can be captured and put into words, it is something that requires ongoing activity. The say-show distinction reminds us that philosophy is about doing something rather than saying something.

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[9] The module description is as follows: "Students will gain a clearer understanding of the concept of responsibility by comparing the role it plays in various different contexts including philosophy, science and art. The module will explore how responsibility is related to concepts such as freedom, intention, chance, accountability and anonymity. This will provide the basis for critical discussion of issues such as the difference between personal and collective responsibility, the question of posthumous responsibility and the possibility of disclaiming responsibility".

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